

Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)

1-1-2011

Chinese cultural factors affecting the culture shock and sociocultural adjustment of American business expatriates working in the People's Republic of China : an exploratory study

Alain Gracianette
George Fox University

This research is a product of the Doctor of Management (DMgt) program at George Fox University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

Recommended Citation

Gracianette, Alain, "Chinese cultural factors affecting the culture shock and sociocultural adjustment of American business expatriates working in the People's Republic of China : an exploratory study" (2011). *Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)*. Paper 6.
<http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dba/6>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University.

CHINESE CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE CULTURE SHOCK AND
SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT OF AMERICAN BUSINESS EXPATRIATES
WORKING IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY.

By

ALAIN GRACIANETTE

A DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Management
With Emphasis on Education

To The

DOCTORAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Dr. Craig Johnson, School of Management
Dr. E. Alan Kluge School of Management
Dr. Scot Headley, School of Education

George Fox University

10/31//2011

Chinese Cultural Factors Affecting the Culture Shock and Sociocultural Adjustment of American
Business Expatriates Working in the People's Republic of China: An Exploratory Study

by

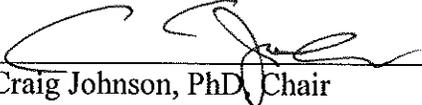
Alain Gracianette

has been approved as a

Dissertation for the Doctor of Management degree

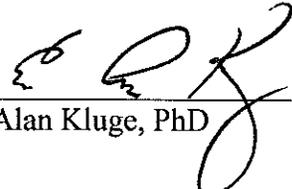
At George Fox University School of Business

Approval Signatures:



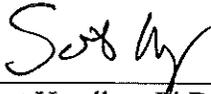
Craig Johnson, PhD, Chair

12/6/11
Date



E. Alan Kluge, PhD

11/1/11
Date



Scot Headley, PhD

11/7/11
Date

DEDICATION

To God Almighty
To whom I owe my life and charisms.

To my ancestors who for centuries had the endurance
of working the soil of my native France.
I owe them my tenacity.

To my parents René and Christiane who were denied the opportunity
to pursue the education they so desired and deserved.
I owe you everything!

To my wife Corinne, her mother Barbara and my sons Andrew and Paul for their love,
most admirable patience and unconditional support throughout my doctoral schooling.
I owe you my happiness.

To my brother Claude; the companion of so many childhood games, and my best friend.
I owe you my fondest memories.

To Tom Ruhl, one of the most generous and gifted educators I ever met.
I owe him my admiration and gratitude.

To the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary,
and those who dedicate their life to peace, enlightenment and the education of others.
I owe you my inspiration.

Honor your father and your mother,
so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

Exodus 20:12

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart my wife Corinne, and my two sons Andrew and Paul who, with incredible heart, generosity and goodness allowed me to pursue a thirty-year old dream. I would have never succeeded without their love and forgiveness.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the following individuals:

To Dr. Craig Johnson, Dr. E. Alan Kluge and Dr. Scot Headley, members of my Research Committee, for their caring, professionalism, on-going trust, guidance and encouragement, and for occasionally pulling me out of the Valley of Despair.

To all of my professors at George Fox University for their tremendous teaching skills and caring, and Rebecca Jensen who patiently helped me with all administrative tasks associated with my schooling at George Fox University.

To Tim Jett, the friend who first triggered my interest in cross-cultural communication and my need to learn more about the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriate managers.

To all expatriate managers who participated in this study and answered my questions with utmost patience and courtesy in spite of their heavy business expatriate schedules. Our confidentiality agreement prevents me to name each and all of you, but you know who you are and please receive my heartfelt gratitude.

To Dr. David Plotkin, Bob Hanks and Heather Mather, respectively Provost, Director of Business and Real Estate Programs and MBA Advisor at Marylhurst University, for their words of encouragement and on-going support over the past several years.

To Father Rick H. Ganz, SJ, Marylhurst University's Vice President for Community Relations, for constantly strengthening my faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

To Canon Crawford, Kirk Howard and Nancy Hoover, Marylhurst University's gifted and generous librarians; my research would have never been as effective without their support.

To my all my friends and colleagues at Marylhurst University for their words of wisdom and on-going encouragement.

To the many friends I neglected while focusing upon the pursuit of an education I dreamed of completing since my youth.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
ABSTRACT.....	x
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background and Context.....	1
Study Rationale – Problem Statement.....	4
Purpose of Study.....	6
Research Questions.....	8
Study Significance.....	8
Assumptions.....	9
Study Delimitations.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	10
Summary.....	13
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
Introduction.....	15
Overview of the Literature on Expatriation.....	17
Culture and Intercultural Communication.....	34
Culture Shock Theory.....	42
Acculturation Theory.....	70
Overview and Complexities of Chinese Culture.....	87
Summary of Important Expatriate Survey Findings.....	104
Summary.....	118
III. METHODOLOGY.....	121
Research Design.....	122
Interviewing.....	124
Informant Selection.....	125
Data Collection and Instrument Description.....	129
The Researcher.....	131
Confidentiality and other Ethical Considerations.....	132
Confirmability, Credibility, Transferability & Dependability	134
The Pilot Study.....	139

Data Analysis.....	140
Summary.....	144
IV. RESULTS.....	146
General Level of Socio-cultural Adaptation of Informants.....	146
Evidence of U-Curve Pattern of Culture Shock.....	149
Chinese Cultural Factors Having a Negative Influence on the Degree of General Adjustment.....	165
Chinese Cultural Factors Having a Negative Influence on the Degree of Work Adjustment.....	198
Chinese Cultural Factors Having a Negative Influence on the Degree of Interactive Adjustment.....	214
Summary.....	220
V. DISCUSSION.....	223
Confirmed Observations of Known Culture Shock Symptoms.....	224
Confirmed U-Curve Appearance.....	230
Possible Existence of a New Zone between the U-Curve and W-Curve models.....	238
Chinese Cultural Factors Having a Negative Influence Upon the Socio- cultural Adjustment of American Business Expatriates in China.....	241
Implications for Organizations.....	262
Implications for Potential Expatriates.....	265
Theoretical Implications.....	266
Study Limitations.....	267
Suggestions for Further Research.....	268
Summary.....	270
APPENDIX A – INFORMED CONSENT.....	275
APPENDIX B – REVISED INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	277
APPENDIX C – ORIGINAL INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	279
REFERENCES.....	281

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Comparative Scores of American, Chinese and World based upon Hofstede's Cross-cultural Dimensions	41
2. Culture Shock Models	63
3. Profile of Study Participants	128
4. Study Averages	130
5. Design Tests and Qualitative Techniques Used to Ensure Research Quality	135
6. Culture Shock and U-Curve Theory Constructs Referred to by Study Participants	150
7. Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Communication Challenges	166
8. Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Cultural Complexity, Societal Layers and Guanxi Networks	175
9. Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Conflicting Time Orientations	179
10. Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Latent Chauvinism and Xenophobia	181
11. Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Moral & Ethical Flexibility	185
12. Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Government & Bureaucratic Interference	192
13. Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Negative Socio-cultural, Economic Infrastructure & Environmental Conditions	193
14. Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of Work Adjustment – Management Challenges	200

15. Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of Work Adjustment – A Difficult Business Culture	210
16. Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of Host Interaction Adjustment – Communication Challenges	215
17. Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of Host Interaction Adjustment – Gaining Trust and Acceptance	219
18. Chinese Cultural Factors with a Negative Effect over American Business Expatriates' Degree of General, Work and Interactive Adjustment	242

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
<i>Figure</i> Study Graphic Characterization.....	7

ABSTRACT

In a globalized world, multinationals (MNCs) compete intensely for commerce supremacy. To manage international operations, MNCs depend heavily on the performance of expatriate managers, and the need for expatriates continues to rise, particularly in mainland China, which now represents the top expatriate destination. However, sharp cross-cultural differences exacerbate traditionally high levels of attrition among expatriates working in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Today, most organizations see China as a hardship country presenting the greatest adjustment challenges to expatriates and their dependants. Nevertheless, despite the breadth of the expatriation literature, very little is known about specific Chinese cultural particularities leading to higher rates of turnover among American business expatriates (ABEs).

Through semi-structured phone interviews with a panel of 14 informants, this exploratory study identified a series of Chinese cultural factors leading to the culture shock of ABEs working in the PRC and having a negative impact upon their general, work and interactive degrees of socio-cultural adjustment.

Findings indicate that informants had indeed been exposed to the four phases of the culture shock phenomenon, which confirms a strong association between the culture shock and U-Curve theoretical perspectives. The study also uncovered that fully-acclimated expatriates seem negatively affected by phenomenon unreported in literature on the U or W-Curve models of adjustment. The phase is characterized by self-doubt, second thoughts and feelings prompting highly-adapted expatriates to reconsider the worthiness of their foreign sojourn. I call such a phase *nostalgia*.

Factors having a negative impact upon general adjustment encompass communication challenges, Chinese cultural complexity, conflicting time orientations, chauvinistic and xenophobic tendencies, perceived moral and ethical flexibility, government interference, and negative socio-cultural, infrastructure and environmental conditions. Factors bearing a negative influence upon work adjustment include a broad array of management and communication challenges, business environment challenges, and exposure to economic rivalry. Interactive adjustment is negatively impacted by communication challenges, socio-cultural formality, difficulties in gaining trust and acceptance, and building rapport with older Chinese generations.

Results reinforce the importance of external or socio-cultural factors as influencers of adjustment in a field long dominated by references to psychological and behavioral perspectives.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context: Internationalization of Business and Globalization

Rapid developments in transportation and communication technology, combined with falling economic barriers, such as tariffs and ideological impediments like the ones imposed throughout the Cold War, have led to the globalization of the world economies. In this globalized world, through their ongoing rivalry for global mercantile supremacy and their ability to invest substantial amounts of capital in targeted markets, multinational corporations (MNCs) play a dominant role. As competition for global dominance intensifies among MNCs, reliance upon expatriates' contributions grows in importance. Root (1976) argues that by proliferating transnational business linkages across their global internal structures, MNCs play a critical role in replacing the historical international trading system with a global industrial system, from which MNCs profit.

Role of Expatriate Managers

To sustain business growth and enable necessary skill transfer from headquarters to international operations, MNCs have traditionally depended upon expatriation as an international HR strategy (Brett & Stroh, 1995; Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall & Stroh 1999; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002). Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall (1992) even

argue that business executives with international experience are not only essential to the success of global corporations; they represent a strategic asset as well. Hence, expatriation implies an ever-rising level of interaction amongst global business executives and constant exposure to multiple cultural environments often leading to a cultural transformation known in the literature as *acculturation* (Berry, 1980, 1994, 1997, 2006).

Expatriation largely rests upon the skills, talents, dedication and performance of expatriate managers, as well as the personal sacrifices of family members willing to live overseas and face sharp cross-cultural differences. Of particular importance to MNCs are globally-minded individuals with keen cultural sensitivity and strong cross-cultural adaptive capabilities who can effectively adjust to different and often challenging foreign cultural environments (Hullinger, 1995). Numerous expatriates and their families effectively adjust to new cultural realities and accomplish successful missions. However, due to a multitude of factors highlighted in a large body of expatriation literature, many do not (Birdseye & Hill, 1995; Copeland & Griggs, 1985; Tung, 1981, 1986, 1987).

Expatriate Failure

The literature indicates that failure from overseas adjustments may cause premature return to the home country, thus creating higher costs for the employer (Copeland & Griggs, 1985; Harzing, 1995; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Tung, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1988, 1998). It has been estimated that 16 to 40% of American expatriates return from overseas assignments prematurely (Birdseye & Hill, 1995; Tung, 1981). Tung (1981) reported failure rates among expatriates between 10 and 20%, while 7% of

the firms surveyed had to recall up to 30% of their expatriates due to their inability to perform satisfactorily. For Tung, such dismissals result in higher costs in terms of time, money and human resources. The average cost of failed expatriate assignments has been estimated between \$200,000 and \$1.2 million (Solomon, 1996; Swaak, 1995). Black and Gregersen (1991c, 1999) further posit that such failures may result onto damaged company reputation, lost business opportunities and lost market or competitive share. In addition, the inability of an expatriate to complete the assignment is likely to generate invisible costs resulting from the lower self-esteem, loss of self-confidence in managerial ability, and loss of prestige among peers (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Tung, 1987). According to Kaye and Taylor (1997), up to 50% of expatriates remaining in their overseas functions perform their duties at unsatisfactory levels of effectiveness.

Greater Failure in China

Expatriation research bears particular significance when considering the importance of China in the global strategy and success of MNCs. Whether engaged in the globalization process through the pursuit of greater markets or cheaper labor, both the size of the Chinese population and China's low labor wages represent tremendous revenue and cost-saving opportunities for MNCs. The impressive growth of the Chinese economy over the past few decades also represents an important strategic consideration factor for MNCs (Qui, 1995; Zhang & Liu, 1995).

According to the U.S.-China Business Council, in 2008 the United States exported \$71.5 billion to the People's Republic of China (PRC), a 9.5% increase over the previous year, while China exported \$337.8 billion to the U.S. Moreover, as of July,

2009, China's total holdings of U.S. dollars represented \$1.43 trillion; a \$229 billion over the previous year (Twaronite, 2009). These figures attest to the significance of trade between the two countries; a trade dominated by MNCs.

Nevertheless, in a 2004 survey of global expatriates, China was cited by 23% of respondents as presenting the greatest assignment difficulties (GMAC Global Relocation Services, 2004). Stuttard (2000) even argues that attrition rates among expatriates in China could be twice as high as failure rates in other countries. This is primarily due to a phenomenon known in the literature on intercultural communication as *culture shock* (Bock, 1970; Kohls, 1984; Oberg 1954, 1960) or *acculturative stress* (Berry, 1970, 1980). Björkman and Schaap (1994) report that most Western businesses actually consider China to be a *hardship* country, and that business expatriates sent to mainland China frequently received hardship compensation representing up to 30 to 70% of their base salary. They further affirm that substantial work-related issues contribute to limiting the number of expatriate volunteers willing to relocate to the PRC. The authors state: “. . . most foreign managers express frustration over the problems they encounter. It is thus of utmost importance for foreign companies to identify and further develop foreign managers who are able to work effectively in China.” (p. 147).

Rationale for the Study - Statement of the Problem

Although the literature on expatriation, intercultural adjustment and culture shock is abundant, there exists a significant shortage of research when it comes to identifying specific Chinese cultural factors leading to the culture shock of ABEs working in the

PRC, and having a negative impact upon their socio-cultural adjustment. The few studies investigating the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates working in China or for Chinese joint-ventures focus upon Western managers as a whole. Even though they often include American expatriates, none solely focus upon the reality of ABEs (e.g., Björkman and Schaap, 1994; Erbacher, D'Netto & Espana, 2006; Fernandez & Underwood, 2007; Goodall, Li, & Warner (2006/2007); Kaye & Taylor, 1997; Selmer, 1999b, 1999c, 2000a, 2000b; 2000c, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002c, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Sergeant & Frenkel, 1988; Weldon & Jehn, 1996). Only two studies (i.e., Davidson, 1987; Hullinger, 1995) investigated conditions pertaining to American expatriates working in the PRC. Of the two, only one (Hullinger's) specifically researched the intercultural adjustment antecedents of American expatriates working in China. This study, however, was not restricted to business expatriates as it included American students, teachers and diplomats. This *research vacuum* is quite significant considering the amplitude of Sino-American trade.

In addition, there exists in the literature a significant lack of qualitative data as scholarly research has been dominated by quantitative inquiries. Most quantitative studies attempt to correlate known literature factors as opposed to seeking meaning and depth of understanding by listening to expatriates' stories (Cherrier, 2005; Haigh & Crowther, 2005). Only a handful of studies (e.g., Björkman & Schaap, 1994; Davidson, 1987; Fernandez & Underwood, 2007; Goodall et al., 2006/2007; Kaye & Taylor, 1997; Hullinger, 1995; Sergeant & Frenkel, 1988) are qualitative in nature.

Considering that an estimated 69,000 American expatriates and dependents currently live in the PRC (U. S. Commercial Service of the U. S. Embassy in Beijing,

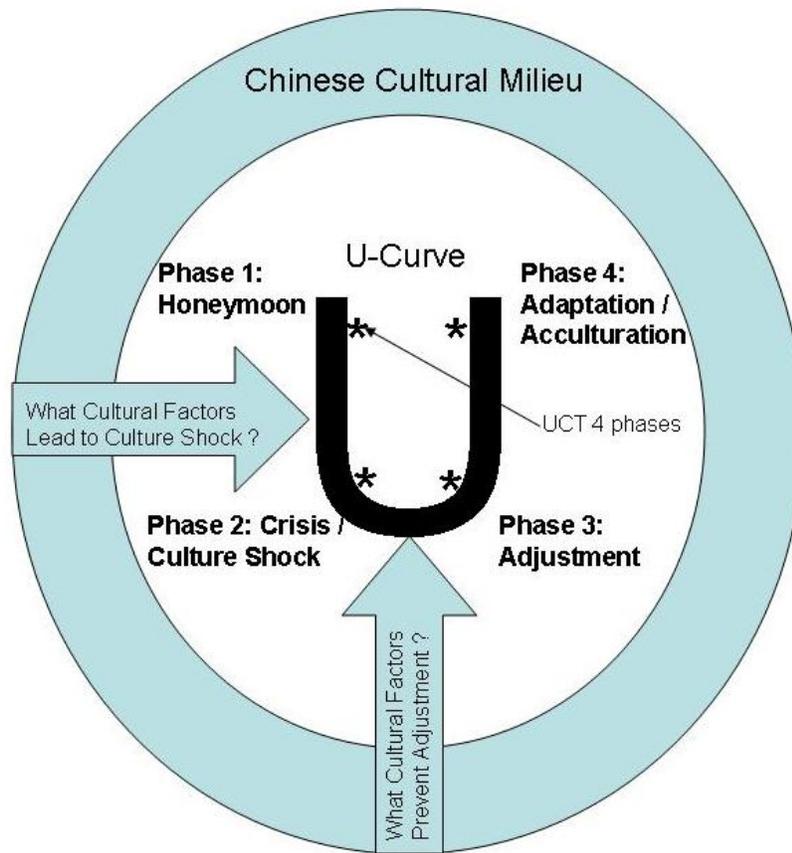
June, 2011), that China is viewed by the expatriate community as a hardship country, and that the average cost of failed expatriate assignments can be as high \$1.2 million (Solomon, 1996; Swaak, 1995), discovering some of the Chinese cultural factors that lead to high attrition rates among ABEs working in the PRC could enhance the quality of pre- and post-departure cross-cultural training (CCT) programs. In turn, this could facilitate the adjustment of expatriates deployed to China, prevent premature resignations leading to negative career consequences, and save significant costs to their employers.

Purpose of Study

The primary purpose of this qualitative inquiry is thus to explore the Chinese cultural environment, to identify in that setting specific cultural factors contributing to the culture shock of ABEs and negatively affecting their socio-cultural adjustment. Interviewing a sample of ABE informants currently working in China to carefully listen to their stories, will yield a deeper comprehension of some of the antecedents fueling high levels of attrition among ABEs. Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou's (1991) empirically-tested model of international adjustment will provide the research framework needed to explore informants' degrees (i.e., general, work, interaction with host nationals) of socio-cultural adjustment.

Figure 1 graphically depicts the dimensions associated with this inquiry.

Figure 1. Study graphic depiction



The diagram links the four phases associated with the U-Curve model of adjustment to the Chinese cultural environment. It illustrates the study's emphasis on uncovering Chinese cultural factors influencing expatriates' psychological transfer from the initial phase of honeymoon to a stage of crisis or culture shock. At a second level, the model shows the study's attempt to uncover Chinese cultural factors preventing the overcoming of culture shock toward prompt and effective socio-cultural adjustment.

Research Questions

This inquiry will be structured around the following general research questions:

1. Have interviewed American expatriate managers experienced culture shock while working in China?
2. If so, what specific Chinese cultural factors have contributed to their culture shock and have negatively affected their degree of general adjustment?
3. If so, what specific Chinese cultural factors have contributed to their culture shock and have negatively affected their degree of work adjustment?
4. If so, what specific Chinese cultural factors have contributed to their culture shock and have negatively affected their degree of interactive adjustment?

Significance of the Study

This study should prove meaningful to ABEs, their dependents, their employers and all individuals or entities interested in the importance of cross-cultural communication as a phenomenon. Additionally, gaining a deeper understanding of Chinese cultural factors having a negative influence over the socio-cultural adjustment of informants might help MNCs trade with other nations of Confucian tradition (Hullinger, 1995). Moreover, the growing interweaving of Chinese and American economies in a rapidly globalizing world will lead to greater economic interdependence and thus growing intercultural exposure. Considering the sharp cultural differences existing between Chinese and American cultures, efforts must be made to understand the root

causes of such differences in an attempt to build greater trade, comprehension and harmony between the two countries. Doing so will not only enhance the level of mutual understanding needed by increasing economic and cultural trade; it might also contribute to continued peace and harmony between two global powers.

Assumptions

First, the study assumes that there indeed exists within the Chinese cultural setting a series of factors that may lead to the culture shock of American expatriate managers working in mainland China and may prevent their prompt and effective intercultural adjustment. Second, it is assumed that by taking the time to interview a panel of expert informants and carefully listening to their stories, this study will properly identify some of the Chinese cultural factors leading to the culture shock of ABEs, and have a negative influence over their prompt and effective adjustment. It is also assumed that participants will willfully participate in the research and will provide factual descriptions of their experiences. Another fundamental assumption is that the researcher will maintain a scientific and unbiased stand throughout the research.

Study Delimitations

To be able to carefully listen to informants' stories (Cherrier, 2005; Haigh & Crowther, 2005), this exploratory study will be purposely limited to a panel of 12 to 15 American business expatriate managers currently working and living in mainland China.

Definition of Terms

The purpose of this section is to define important terms associated with this study in an attempt to clarify at the outset potential relationships between such concepts. The following terms and operational meanings provide readers with a better understanding of the context associated with this specific research:

Acculturation: is defined as the dual process of cultural and psychological change triggered by close contact between two cultural groups (Berry, 1980, 1994, 1997, 2006).

Acculturative stress: Berry (1994) defines acculturative stress as “a phenomenon that may underlie poor adaptation including a reduction in the health status of individuals, identity confusion, and problems in daily life, with family, work, and school” (p. 136).

Acculturation styles or modes: refers to four possible adaptation outcomes: (a) *assimilation*; (b) *rejection*; (c) *deculturation*; and, (d) *integration* (Berry, 1980).

Adaptation: is defined by Berry (1994) as “. . . the term used to refer to both the strategies used during, and to the outcomes of acculturation” (p. 131). Within this framework, various adaptive strategies can lead to various outcomes.

Adjustment: Berry (1994) posits that at the individual level, three basic adaptation strategies have been established; those are known as *adjustment*, *reaction* and *withdrawal*. Turner (1988) defines the concept as “the third stage of culture shock, in which people actively seek out effective problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies” (p. 401). The terms ‘acculturation’, ‘adaptation’ and ‘adjustment’ are used interchangeably throughout the literature (Hanigan, 1990); hence, the three terms will be considered synonymous and will be used interchangeably throughout this inquiry.

American Business Expatriates (ABEs) or American Expatriate Managers

(AEMs): is defined as expatriate managers of American citizenship working in mainland China. The terms will be used interchangeably throughout the study.

Antecedents: Hullinger (2005) defines the term as “those factors that contribute to adjustment, adaptation, and effectiveness” (p. 9). The terms *factors* and *antecedents* will be used interchangeably throughout the study.

Anxiety: A debilitating condition of fear, which interferes with normal life functions (Cornell, 2010).

Culture: socially transmitted beliefs, behavior patterns and values that are shared by a group of people (Hofstede, 1980). *Culture* reflects the learned and shared knowledge, beliefs, and rules of social groups that influence behavior (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004).

Cultural distance: Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) and Tung (1987) suggest that the more different an expatriate’s country and the host country are, the more difficult the cultural adjustment will be.

Cultural intelligence: is defined as a person’s ability to successfully adapt to new cultural settings (Joo-seng, 2004).

Culture shock: Oberg (1960) defined culture shock as being “. . . precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (p. 177).

Expatriate or Expatriate Manager or EXM or Business Expatriate: an employee who is sent by a multinational parent company on a work assignment in a foreign nation (Aycan & Kanungo, 1997).

Expatriate success: is defined as the successful completion of an international assignment by an expatriate manager for the entire duration of his/her expatriation contract with a given employer (Tung, 1987).

Expatriate failure: is conversely defined as the unsuccessful completion of an international assignment by an expatriate manager combined with premature return to the home country before expiration of his/her expatriation contract with a given employer.

Greater China: is defined as a cultural entity encompassing mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan (Selmer, 2006a).

Intercultural or cross-cultural: The terms *cross-cultural* and *intercultural* will appear interchangeably to describe variables relevant to many cultures around the world.

Intercultural effectiveness: is defined by Fisher and Härtel (2003) as “the ability or competence of a person within the cultural environment” (p. 5).

Multinational corporations or (MNCs) or Multinationals: are defined by Peppas (2004) as parent companies that engage in foreign production through their affiliates located in several countries, exercise direct control over the policies of their affiliates, and implement business strategies in production, marketing, finance and staffing that transcend national boundaries. The terms *multinational corporations*, *multinationals* and *MNCs* will appear interchangeably throughout the study.

Sojourn: Furnham and Bochner (1986) define sojourn as a “temporary stay at a new place” (p. 112).

Sojourners: individuals who are temporarily living in a different culture (Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

Stress: Berry (1994) defines stress as a “. . . generalized physiological and psychological state of the organism, brought about by the experience of stressors in the environment, and which requires some reduction . . . through a process of coping until some satisfactory adaptation to the new situation is achieved (p. 136).

Western Expatriate Managers (WEMs) or Western Expatriates: Anglo-Saxon (i.e., North American, British, Australian) or continental European business executives working primarily for MNCs doing business in China (Selmer, 2001a).

Summary

The strength of American MNCs is vital to the U.S. economy and the economic well-being of American citizens. Such potency is a function of ABEs' being capable of effectively managing international operations and foreign subsidiaries. This implies an ability to overcome a set of known psychological and socio-cultural acculturation challenges known as culture shock. Yet, due to sharp differences between Chinese and American cultures, the amplitude of the culture shock phenomenon faced by American business expatriates is greatest for expatriate managers working in mainland China.

Although the literature on expatriation, acculturation and culture shock is expansive, very few qualitative inquiries have sought to collect through direct interviews with ABEs, rich, thick, meaningful, contextually-situated data pertaining to their culture shock and socio-cultural adaptation. Moreover, no study has attempted to identify within the Chinese cultural setting specific factors potentially leading to both their culture shock

and having a negative influence over their degree of general, work and interactive adjustment; doing so is the purpose of this exploratory study.

The literature of intercultural contact and communication, expatriation, culture shock, acculturation and intercultural adaptation is broad, deep, expansive and fragmented. Contributions have been made since the 1930's from multiple scientific traditions such as anthropology, sociology, social-psychology, psychiatry, communication and management. However, this broad array of traditions has brought a multitude of theoretical perspectives and the literature is in need of greater interdisciplinary integration (Kim, 2001). This explains the breadth of the literature review.

Chapter II introduces the conceptual foundations and theoretical frameworks associated with the intended research. In addition, the chapter presents a summary of important research findings further supporting the purpose of our intended study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Worthen, Sanders, and Fitzpatrick (1997) argue that referring to concepts or research findings presented in the literature to introduce necessary frameworks and approaches constitutes a valid methodology for writing a literature review. It is thus the purpose of this literature review to introduce at the outset key concepts associated with the literature on sojourn, expatriation, cross-cultural contact, intercultural communication, international HR management, and CCT, as well as theoretical frameworks associated with this study. Particular emphasis will be placed upon the notions of culture, culture shock, acculturation and socio-cultural adjustment as these constructs are central to this proposed naturalistic inquiry.

A secondary purpose of this literature review is to place researched constructs and phenomena within proper theoretical perspectives. In addition, the review will attempt to summarize important findings associated with known culture shock and acculturation challenges faced by Western, and most particularly American, expatriate managers working in the PRC. Lastly, providing potential research frameworks and identifying potential research gaps worthy of investigation are other purposes of this literature

review. The chapter will conclude by presenting some potential research implications in the fields of acculturation and cultural adjustment in the Chinese context.

This literature review is divided into six distinct but ultimately related parts pertaining to the research topic. The first section focuses upon the general context of this study and presents important constructs such as globalization, MNCs and expatriation. It introduces the population of interest (i.e., expatriates) and the multiple dimensions associated with expatriation. The second section provides a general overview of the literature on intercultural contact and communication. It brings forward and defines significant constructs such as *culture* and *cross-cultural differences*, presents multiple dimensions, theories and models associated with intercultural research, and uses Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory to link and contrast Chinese and American cultures. Section three introduces Culture Shock Theory, a critical theoretical perspective related to the inquiry. In addition, the section discusses the strong association between Culture Shock Theory and the U-Curve model of cultural adaptation also known as U-Curve Theory (UCT). Part four uses Acculturation Theory to bring some clarity to a theoretically-disconnected field, and establish the interplay between vital constructs such as *acculturation*, *adaptation* and *adjustment*, which are closely associated with the study. Part five of the review presents a brief overview of the Chinese cultural context and introduces key constructs associated with some of the complexities of the Chinese cultural environment, as they may affect the cultural adjustment of ABEs working in China. The last section focuses upon literature findings resulting from studies of Western and other expatriates, with particular emphasis upon American expatriates, as well as expatriates working and living in mainland China.

Overview of the Literature on Expatriation

Harris and Kumra (2000) contend that scholarly research about expatriation and expatriate training has been *erratic*; research peaked in the early 80's, declined considerably over the following fifteen years, to rebound over the past decade due to three sets of factors. First, increased international trade and competition have prompted renewed attention to the cost and effectiveness of expatriation. Further, increased trade between industrial countries has created a shift in expatriation patterns as a lower percentage of business expatriates is now going to developing countries. Lastly, the traditional profile of the male, married, career expatriate is being challenged by a growing number of female expatriates and the ambition of young executives willing to travel to gain international experience.

Context - MNCs and Globalization

Gabel and Bruner (2003) highlight the global amplitude, reach and power of MNCs and report the following statistics:

With more than 63,000 multinational enterprises and 821,000 foreign subsidiaries, multinational corporations directly employ 90 million people (of whom some 20 million in the developing world), pay more than \$1.5 trillion in wages, contribute 25% of the world's gross product, and pay more than \$1.2 trillion in taxes. . . The 1,000 largest multinationals account for 80% of the world's industrial output (p. 7)

According to Gabel and Bruner (2003), 90% of the world's 500 largest MNC's are located in the economically-developed parts of the world such as North America, Europe and Japan, with 3,387 MNCs headquartered in the U.S.

In a strongly integrated global economy, MNCs rely increasingly upon the skills and effectiveness of international business executives, particularly the ones willing to accept, face and overcome the numerous intercultural communication challenges associated with overseas assignments. Expatriates thus play a preponderant role in the success and growth of MNCs. Referring to a study by PricewaterhouseCoopers (1999/2000), Peppas (2004) found that 75% of surveyed firms expected in the near future an increase in the number of employees sent on international assignments. In spite of the high costs associated with international assignments, expatriation brings numerous benefits such as prompt market entry, effective transfer of technical knowledge, better cultural transfer within entities resulting from mergers and acquisitions, and international management training programs. Executives too benefit from expatriation as Tung (1998b) found that international assignments brought important career benefits.

Selmer (2001a) posits that the vast majority of expatriate managers working for MNCs around the world originate in Western Europe and North America. This assertion does not consider, however, the significant population of Japanese or Taiwanese, Singaporean and other expatriates of Chinese ancestry sent to mainland China by MNCs. Ultimately, North American, Western European and Japanese firms dominate the industrial world, and increasingly compete in China for access to cheaper production costs and access to the world's largest consumer market. According to Selmer (2001a),

such firms have traditionally relied upon home country nationals to manage foreign operations.

Expatriation Amplitude

Baruch and Altman (2002) indicate that an estimated 100,000 American expatriate business managers work outside the U.S. According to non-official numbers estimated by the U. S. Commercial Service of the U. S. Embassy in Beijing (June, 2011), an approximate 22,000 American expatriates live in the Shanghai area and 26,000 in the Beijing area, with a total estimated population of 68,500 American expatriates currently living in China. However, these numbers include non-business expatriates and do not account for non-registered expatriates living in the country. A survey of global firms (GMAC, 2008) confirms that the need for expatriates continues to rise as 67% of surveyed organizations considered increasing their expatriate forces, particularly in China which now represents the number one destination for business expatriates.

Business expatriation has traditionally been the domain of male executives. For the most part, expatriated women within the business context were family members (i.e., spouses and daughters). Although the ranks of female expatriate managers are rapidly growing, studies associated with research on expatriate woman managers (Adler, 1984a, 1984b, 1986b; 1987; 1993; 1994; Caligiuri & Cascio 1998; Caligiuri, Joshi & Lazarova, 1999) remain rare. The average duration of an expatriation assignment lasts from three to five years (Tung, 1988; Selmer & Lee, 1994; Selmer 2001c).

Multiple Roles and Needed Aptitudes of Expatriate Managers

Hofstede (1991, 1999) distinguishes between the *values* and *practices* of MNCs. For him, MNCs promote values born in the organization's home country, which are not evenly distributed among employees with a distinct national origin; contrarily, practices represent the glue that keeps global firms together. Expatriate managers represent an important asset in spreading and enforcing such shared practices. Aycan (1997) shares Hofstede's contention and sees the primary role of an expatriate as being "a catalyst who secures the continuity of the MNCs organizational structure and philosophy in the local unit while ensuring the fit between MNC practices and local demands" (p. 434).

Through an empirical study of MNC subsidiaries, Hetrick (2002) contends that expatriation represents a solid *environmental scanning* and *internal data gathering* opportunity for MNCs. Downes and Thomas (2000) contend that in spite of high costs and frequent failures, expatriation remains an important international staffing strategy for MNCs due to several factors. First, international HR management (HRM) sees expatriation as a *communication-enhancement vector* between headquarters and subsidiaries. Second, expatriation creates *country linkages*. Lastly, it helps the organization gain greater *insight* over international operations. Boyacigiller (1991) even perceives expatriation as a *strategic resource* enhancing the knowledge base and experience of current and future expatriate managers toward the effective management of foreign operations. Selmer (2006a) too highlights the strategic importance that the experience of expatriate managers represents for their employers. Carpenter, Sanders and Gregersen (2000) make similar assertions; after comparing the effectiveness of American CEO's with and without overseas assignment experience, they affirm that U.S. multinationals led by CEOs with international assignment

experience performed more effectively than similar companies managed by CEO's deprived of such an experience.

Hetrick (2002) contends that MNCs actually rely upon expatriates for multiple reasons including: (a) personnel development; (b) lack of local know-how, control and coordination; (c) culture transfer; and, (d) temporary projects. Hetrick highlights the importance of *control*, which can be *direct* or *indirect*. Direct control provides decision-making autonomy and latitude in hiring, promoting or dismissing local employees, vendors or partners, while indirect control occurs more insidiously through the transmission of corporate and national beliefs, values, norms and processes. Suutari and Busch (2001) support such contentions and argue that expatriate managers assume "central roles as controllers, coordinators and knowledge transferrers [*sic*] within multinational and global firms" (p. 298). Aycan (1997) further contends that the effectiveness of an expatriate is a function of both individual competencies and the employer's (MNC) ability to properly manage the expatriation process.

Bird and Mukuda (1989) posit that expatriates employed in *liaison* positions at overseas subsidiaries constitute a *vital link* to the parent company. Harzing (2001) confirms such contention and argues that expatriates play a very significant role in the proper management of international business operations by maintaining *essential communication* between such operations and headquarters. Harzing and Van Ruysseveldt (2004) see *information sharing* and *knowledge transfers* as key expatriation dimensions.

Expatriate managers have been perceived as *agents of learning* (Simon, 1991) and *communication enhancers* or *facilitators* who help their firms by acquiring vital knowledge and disseminating it throughout their organization for proper use and

application (Bonache & Brewster, 2001; Hocking, Brown, & Harzing, 2004; Noorderhaven & Harzing, 2009; Selmer, 2006a; Welch, 2003). Several scholars (i.e., Downes & Thomas, 1999; Ulrich, von Glinow, & Jick, 1993) actually view MNCs themselves as *learning entities* benefiting from the opportunities given to expatriate managers to discover the intricacies of international business management. Other scholars (i.e., Bird, 2001; Harzing, 2001a; 2001b; Selmer, 2006a) highlight the crucial role played by expatriates in transmitting *implicit* or *tacit knowledge* acquired through field experience. A few empirical studies (i.e., Caligiuri & Di Santo, 2001; Hocking et al., 2004; Harzing, 2001a) actually corroborate the learning dimensions of expatriation.

Living and working in a foreign country for extended periods of time is not for everyone; doing so requires psychological characteristics and socio-cultural aptitudes that are quite different from the ones needed to live in one's own country. Identifying the inter and intrapersonal skills, psychological attributes and competencies most needed by business expatriates to perform effectively in foreign assignments, and the identification of relevant selection criteria have long been topics of interest for expatriation scholars.

Over the years, scholars have researched and identified a series of predictive variables associated with expatriate success and failure (Black, 1990; Black & Gregersen, 1991a; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black & Porter, 1991; Caligiuri, 2000; Hawes & Kealey, 1981; Tung, 1987, 1998; Wills & Barham, 1994). Many studies (e.g., Black, 1990; Caligiuri, 2000; Church, 1982; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985) have placed emphasis upon discovery of unique personality traits common to well-adjusted, effective and thus successful expatriates. Some of the most common personality characteristics possessed by successful expatriates include having: (a) avid curiosity and willingness to learn; (b)

demonstrating self-awareness and emotional resilience; (c) being mentally flexible and risk tolerant; (d) possessing a sense of humility and strong personal morality; (e) being able to show cultural empathy and engage in active listening; and, (f) being action oriented with a time orientation geared toward present as opposed to past or future.

Stone (1991) places emphasis upon selection criteria and identifies ten dimensions perceived as critical to expatriate assignment success: (a) adaptive abilities; (b) technical competence; (c) adaptive capabilities of spouse and family; (d) relational skills; (e) willingness to serve on overseas assignment; (f) prior international experience; (g) understanding of host country culture; (h) academic credentials; (i) comprehension of host country language; and, (j) understanding of one's home country culture.

Through an empirical study, Erbacher et al. (2006) positively tested three personal (i.e., perceived career path, willingness to relocate, degree of personal international orientation) and six situational variables (i.e., selection criteria, training, role clarity, organizational support, strength of relationship between the expatriate and the firm, performance management system) believed to be associated with expatriate success in international assignments. The study found a strong correlation between expatriate success and performance management, training, organizational support, willingness to relocate and strength of the relationship between the expatriate and the firm.

Other expatriation scholars have highlighted the importance of dimensions such as technical expertise, professional experience and competence, prior deployment learning, and knowledge of organizational principles, strategies and systems (Barham & Devine, 1991; Brewster, 1988; 1991; Mendenhall, Dunbar, & Oddou, 1987; Tung, 1981).

Similarly, Hawes and Kealey (1981) posit that *technical expertise* is a significant dimension in acculturation. Bardo and Bardo (1981) further suggest that well-adjusted expatriates express higher levels of technical expertise than poorly adjusted ones. However, the literature indicates that excessive focus upon technical talent can bring *cultural myopia* to HR departments when selecting expatriate candidates (Tung, 1982).

Other studies (Caligiuri, 2000; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1999) have focused upon personality characteristics and identified *extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness* and *intellect* as needed personality attributes. Caligiuri reinforces the importance of *technical competence, cultural adaptability, extensive international travel*, and *previous exposure to intercultural adjustment* as vital attributes.

Kelley and Meyers (1999) propose a Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI), which is divided into four categories of cross-cultural adaptability: (a) *flexibility/openness*; (b) *emotional resilience*; (c) *personal autonomy*, and (d) *perceptual acuity*. Wills and Barham (1994) categorize all needed characteristics into three key dimensions: (a) *cognitive complexity*; (b) *emotional energy*, and, (c) *psychological maturity*, which they perceive as essential components to the panoply of an effective international business manager. For Wills and Barham, being humble, showing cultural empathy, and being able to listen to or relate to other cultures equates to possessing *cognitive complexity*; demonstrating self-awareness, being risk-tolerant and being emotionally-resilient represent *high emotional energy*; and, being willing to learn, having great personal morality and focusing on the ‘present’ indicate *psychological maturity*.

Harris and Kumra (2000) highlight the importance of *relational* or *soft skills* for effective expatriates. Referring to (Barham & Devine, 1991) they cite “adaptability in

new situations, sensitivity to different cultures, ability to work in international teams and language skills” (p. 604) as characteristics most agreed upon by expatriation scholars (Holopainen & Björkman, 2005; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1986; Torbion, 1982).

Other scholars (i.e., Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Blake, Heslin, & Curtis, 1996) indicates that the *self*, *relational* and *perceptual* dimensions of personality represent some of the most beneficial adaptive characteristics needed by expatriates to successfully adjust to cross-cultural environments. While relational and perceptual skills allow expatriates to effectively relate to others, the *self* dimension pertains to individuals’ ability to comprehend their own cultural conditioning and understand how cultural biases can negatively affect members of other cultures. Bhawuk (1998) refers to this construct as *cultural awareness*. Business expatriates equipped with strong cultural awareness are more perceptive about the components and limitations of their own culture, and are more capable of understanding the influence of their culture on others. As a result of such sensitivity, culturally-aware expatriates are more likely to cope with cross-cultural challenges and thrive in a new cultural environment.

Expatriation Challenges and Failure

Fifty years of research in the field of expatriation have generated an abundant amount of literature, which consistently brings light upon the unique acculturation challenges faced by expatriates in overseas assignments (e.g., high turnover and failure rates among expatriates), as well as the resulting negative consequences affecting failed expatriates, their employers and their families (e.g., high divorce rates).

Accepting an assignment in a far away country can affect an expatriate's ability to communicate effectively with headquarters or loved ones remaining at home, prevent safe or frequent travel between home and host country, or simply bring stress and jet lag fatigue. Obviously, from social, cultural, economic, political, legal or technological standpoints, all countries are not created equal. Accepting an expatriate assignment in Toronto, London or Paris may bring different levels of adaptive stress than an assignment in Astana, Ulan Bator or Bogotá. The nature of the assignment itself and associated responsibilities affect the adaptation process as well. The availability or lack of social support is highlighted throughout the literature as a key cultural adaptation *conditioner*. Additionally, the *duration* of a given assignment can affect the process; it is one thing to spend one or two years away from home; another to spend five or ten. Moreover, trust in the promises made about return conditions and benefits can affect the adaptation process as well. The literature actually abounds with examples of returning expatriates being rewarded for their hard work and accomplishments with false or broken promises. Lastly, the latitude that an expatriate had in selecting or refusing an assignment can greatly affect his or her willingness to adapt to the new environment (Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

Existing evidence indicates that an approximate 30% of expatriate managers sent on overseas assignments on behalf of U. S. corporations fail (Black, 1988; Copeland & Griggs, 1985; Marquardt & Engel, 1993; Tung, 1981). Tung (1981) presents a study reporting that more than half the MNCs surveyed (n = 80) reported failure rates among expatriates between 10 and 20%, while 7% of the firms surveyed had to recall up to 30% of their expatriates due to their inability to perform satisfactorily. Birdseye and Hill (1995) indicate that that 16 to 40% of American expatriates return from overseas

assignments prematurely, while failure rate in developing countries can reach 70%. Forster (1997) suggests 28% for British expatriates. Fernandez and Underwood (2007) report that a general understanding among business circles is that 15 to 25% of expatriate assignments in China will terminate early. Such numbers clearly support our study intent. Yet, most of the research associated with expatriate failure has been U.S.-centric, lacks empirical substantiation and is a bit outdated (Lee, 2005, 2007).

Lee (2005, 2007) reports that research on expatriate failure has placed primary emphasis on three key dimensions: (a) identification of the ‘ideal’ expatriate candidate (Zeira & Banai, 1985); (b) the ineffectiveness or lack cross-cultural training (CCT) programs (Black & Mendenhall, 1990); and, (c) spouse discontentment and family issues (Black & Stephens, 1989). Furnham and Bochner (1986) bring attention to a number of dimensions associated with business transfers, which can potentially affect an expatriate’s adjustment. They encompass the following factors: (a) distance; (b) country; (c) job; (d) social support; (e) time; (f) returns; and, (g) volunteering.

Klineberg (1982) actually argues that “the seeds of many during-sojourn disasters are sown years previously because the ‘wrong’ people were selected to go abroad.” (p. 13). There, however, exist some dissensions in the literature with regards to the true rates of expatriate failure around the world. Harzing (1995) and Forster (1997) in particular have argued that insufficient empirical evidence supports estimated numbers. After conducting a thorough investigation of the literature on expatriation, Harzing (1995) criticizes the established measurement of expatriate failure in terms of *premature return* to the home country. Harzing argues that non-performing expatriates who are allowed to remain in overseas postings can actually do greater damage to the organization than the

ones returning home prematurely. Harzing's investigation further revealed that the propagation of high expatriate failure rates throughout the literature was actually due to three root articles; only one of which contained empirical evidence. Actual data indicated lower rates of expatriate failure than the one propagated throughout the literature.

Moreover, some scholars claim that limiting the definition of expatriation failure to premature return as much of the literature indicates is far too simplistic (Ashamalla, 1998; Simeon & Fujiu, 2000) or too constricting (Lee, 2005, 2007) to properly assess the extent of the phenomenon. Lee finds the prevailing definition misleading as it implies that expatriates remaining in their assignment are doing well; this is of course not always the case (Sappinen, 1993). For Lee, dimensions such as non-attainment of performance objectives or failure to properly tap the skills, knowledge and potential of returning expatriates, should broaden the notion of failure.

Additionally, the literature suggests that a broad array of personal, work-related and cross-cultural factors lead to expatriate failure. Personal factors such as *materialism* (Birdseye & Hill, 1995), *spousal discontent* (Stephens & Black, 1991; Tung, 1987), *consumerism*, *situational factors* (i.e., poor cultural preparation) (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Tung, 1986); and *work-related issues* (i.e., lack of CCT and support) (Hetrick, 2002) negatively affect expatriates. Tung (1987) further alludes to the failure of the expatriates themselves to adapt to both living and working in a different culture. Tung narrows down the variables that lead to the success or failure of expatriate assignments to four factors: (a) personal traits and characteristics (i.e., introversion vs. extroversion), (b) technical competence, (c) spousal and family support, and (d) ability to cope with environmental conditions.

Lee (2005, 2007) reviews the literature on expatriation and narrows down the main reasons associated with expatriation failure to six constructs: (a) expatriates' inability to adapt to a new cultural environment; (b) failure to achieve family acceptance and assimilation; (c) lack of support from corporate headquarters; (d) not having an open mindset; (e) unwillingness or inability to learn; (f) lack of technical competence.

The literature brings light to the critical role played by spouses and family support in effective expatriation prior, during and after overseas deployment. Fernandez and Underwood (2007) refer to a 1999/2000 PricewaterhouseCoopers survey of 270 MNCs employing 65,000 indicating that due to dual career and other family-related issues, 80% of employees considered for expatriate assignments end up passing the opportunity. Tung (1981) submits that the primary explanation given by American firms to justify their expatriates' premature returns from overseas assignments is *spousal discontent* and failure of the expatriate's spouse to successfully adapt to the foreign culture. After interviewing the spouses of American expatriates in Spain, Gilly (1995) confirms the difficulties faced by expatriates' spouses in adjusting to new consumer environments. Harvey (1985) supports Tung's contentions about the critical role of expatriate's family in enhancing intercultural adjustment.

In an integrative review of literature findings, Andreason (2008) posits that the overall expatriation experience received by expatriates and their spouses varies greatly in terms of "degree and kind" (p. 382). Andreason further highlights a fundamental paradox of expatriation; although spouses usually have greater exposure to host nationals and local culture (e.g., daily grocery shopping, taking children to school), they receive less pre-departure and in-country training and support. Considering that spousal support plays

a crucial role in effective expatriation and that spousal inability to adjust is a proven antecedent of premature expatriate return, this constitutes an aberration that must be addressed by international HR departments (Black, 1988; Harvey, 1985; Tung, 1981).

Consequences of Expatriation Failure

Tung (1984) and Copeland and Griggs (1985) contend that failure from overseas adjustments and premature return to the home country create highest costs for the employer in terms of time, money and human resources. Lobel (1990), Kaye and Taylor (1997) estimate that up to 50% of expatriates remaining in their overseas functions perform at unsatisfactory levels of effectiveness, which negatively affects organizations across functions and managerial ranks.

From a corporate viewpoint, costs are usually quantified in financial terms. Lublin and Smith (1994) report that in the mid-90's, the average yearly cost of sending an American expatriate with a family of two overseas ranged from \$157,762 in Beijing to \$220,370 in Tokyo. However, the average cost of failed expatriate assignments has been estimated between \$200,000 and \$1.2 million (Ashamalla, 1998; Mervosh & McClenahan, 1997; Solomon 1996; Swaak, 1995), while the total estimated cost of failed expatriation has been estimated at \$2 billion a year (Ashamalla, 1998; McEnery & DesHarnais, 1990; Punnett, 1997). Direct cost calculations usually include costs related to premature repatriation of failed expatriates and dependents as well as the relocation, compensation and retraining of replacing executives (Lee, 2005, 2007).

Other scholars (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black, Gregersen et al. 1992; Daniels & Insch, 1998; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Shilling, 1993; Stephens & Black, 1991) posit that high failure rates also bring *indirect costs* in terms of damaged company reputation, lost business opportunities, lost market or competitive share, and reduced productivity. It is nevertheless important to remember that the narrowness of the prevailing definition of expatriation failure may have negatively affected the proper financial quantification of the phenomenon (Lee, 2007). Lee proposes a broadening of the framework defining failed expatriation to encompass an expatriate's inability to adapt to a new cultural environment, the family's lack of assimilation to that environment, the failure to meet management objectives, and the undervaluation of repatriates' skills and knowledge.

Aycan (1997) affirms that failure to complete an entire assignment is equally detrimental to expatriates and their employers. Moreover, the inability of an expatriate to complete the assignment is likely to generate *invisible psychological costs* resulting from lower self-esteem, loss of self-confidence in managerial ability, and loss of prestige among peers (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Tung, 1987). Stroh (1995) even argued that expatriate failure is more likely to have an *adverse effect* on the willingness of experienced and qualified executives to embrace alternate overseas assignments.

Summary

Expatriation is a complex phenomenon of growing importance to MNCs battling for global supremacy. It affects multiple stakeholders such as expatriate managers, their dependents, their employers, the international operations they manage, and the host nationals they interact with on a daily basis. While some expatriate managers and

families can effectively deal with a myriad of intercultural challenges and overcome culture shock to thrive in overseas assignments, others cannot and return home prematurely, triggering significant costs for both expatriates and their employers.

Regardless of causes, expatriation failure results in countless hard and soft financial costs for employers and deep emotional, psychological and financial (i.e., high divorce rate) costs for failed expatriates and dependents. Many expatriates attempt to prevent shame and negative career consequences by remaining overseas until expatriation contract expiration, but fail to meet their professional obligations and suffer greatly in the process. Expatriation failure is not limited to premature return and poor job performance; the phenomenon encompasses the inability to adapt to and enjoy a new cultural environment, the lack of family assimilation to that environment, ineffective work performance, and undervaluation of repatriates skills' and knowledge.

Through scholarly conceptualizations and empirical research, the literature presents a broad array of challenges faced by expatriates in overseas assignments. It also highlights the numerous characteristics, psychological traits, interpersonal skills and professional competencies needed to effectively cope with cross-cultural challenges and adjust to foreign environments. The literature brings forward the crucial role played by dependents on expatriate adjustment. The literature further establishes the proven responsibility of international HR departments and other decision-makers in ignoring scholarly findings to select, prepare, train and support expatriate managers in their assignments. Empirical evidence shows that HR departments, most particularly American ones, have traditionally *played it safe* by selecting expatriation candidates on the basis of demonstrated technical expertise and professional competence, as opposed to needed

psychological and behavioral skills. Ethnocentric overtones too have played a role in creating poor expatriation-related policies. As a result, many psychologically unfit and/or interculturally incompetent candidates have been unwisely granted overseas management responsibilities for which they were not qualified. This often leads to negative consequences for unsuccessful expatriates, the operations and business relationships they manage, their employers, their families and their careers.

Ultimately, the literature boils down all variables leading to expatriate failure to a handful of personal, situational and cross-cultural factors. Key personal success factors include possession of fundamental interpersonal skills such as (a) open mindedness; (b) willingness to learn and adapt; (c) a capacity to cope with sharp cross-cultural differences; (d) previous experience in international travel, business and deployment; and, (e) technical competence. Critical situational factors include: (a) relevant expatriation candidate selection criteria; (b) effective pre and post-departure CCT for employees and families; (c) ongoing corporate and family support over the assignment duration; and, (d) meaningful re-entry support assistance and career-enhancement processes and policies. However, more research is needed to identified in specific environments cross-cultural factors that lead to culture shock and negatively affect business expatriates; most particularly those working in the Chinese cultural environment. This constitutes a primary purpose of this study.

Culture and Intercultural Communication

Culture

Communication between different people and cultures has been the object of scholarly research, for more than half a century (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963a, 1963b; Hall, 1959, 1966; Lysgaard, 1955). Nevertheless, there exists a great deal of controversy and discussion in the literature on intercultural communication and related fields (i.e., anthropology) about the proper definition of *culture*. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) uncovered 150 definitions of culture in the anthropological literature alone.

Dahl (2004) explains that historically, the word culture derives from the Latin word *colere*, which could be translated as ‘to build’, ‘to care for’, ‘to plant’ or ‘to cultivate’. Thus, culture usually refers to a construct resulting from human interference; “culture is cultivated” (Dahl, 2004, p. 1).

Some definition attempts considered descriptive perspectives while others considered functional ones. Brislin (1990, 1993) defines culture in terms of *shared ideals, value, life assumption, and goal-directed activities* acknowledged as true and relevant by members of a given society. Triandis (1993, 1994) actually highlights important characteristics of culture and understands the construct to be a set *norms, roles, and values* that produce *meaning*. In turn, values affect cultures through behavioral patterns and shared experiences (Schein, 1992; Spencer-Oatey, 2000; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). However, one of the most famous and useful definitions of culture was proposed by Hofstede (1980) who defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (p. 25). The

notion of *collective programming* implies that culture distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. It infers that culture could be situated between human nature, which is not programmed or programmable, and an individual's personality, which is indeed programmed (Hofstede, 1980).

Hofstede (1991) introduced a famous *onion* analogy to describe the four layers that in his view can be identified in any culture. The core of Hofstede's cultural onion is composed of *values*, which form the hidden layer of any culture or "broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others" (p. 8). In Hofstede's view, values represent the ideas that members of any culture possess with regards to how things *ought to be*. According to Hofstede, surrounding the value core, are three adjacent layers successively composed of *rituals* (e.g. greeting rituals), *heroes* (e.g., individuals esteemed by a given society), and *symbols* (e.g., graphic or verbal representations) (Hofstede, 1991).

Cross-Cultural Differences

Torbion (1982, 1994) focuses upon cross-cultural differences and defines culture as *frames of references*. At the national level, culture encompasses an array of behavioral norms and attitudes defined as *national norms*; these norms affect all citizens within that national society. Likewise, individuals possess their own personal frames of references, which have been patiently developed over time through constant exposure to a national identity. Torbion explains that when an individual is exposed to another cultural context, that individual's cultural frame of reference cannot instantly change. Although still relevant in terms of *clarity*, the cultural modeling proves inappropriate in terms of *applicability* and effective functioning in the new cultural milieu. P.T.P. Wong, L.C.J.

Wong, and Scott (2006) actually see cultural differences as the result of the confluence of multiple factors such as geographic and physical environments, historical and political contexts, and preeminent patterns of thinking such as the ones demonstrated in religion and philosophy.

Behavioral Tension between Culture and Psychology

There exist in the literature dissensions about whether culture or individual and group psychology most affect individual and group behavior. Segall, Lonner and Berry (1998) highlight the phenomenon by stating that psychology has “long ignored culture as a source of human behavior and still takes little account of theories or data from other Euro-American cultures” (p. 1101). For these scholars, human behavior only proves relevant when observed or considered within a given socio-cultural context. Pedersen (1999) supports such a contention and argues vociferously that all behaviors are affected and modeled by cultural forces. This is an important distinction as this research will focus upon Chinese cultural factors affecting the socio-cultural adjustment of participants as opposed to their psychological one.

Intercultural Communication Theories

“There is nothing more practical than a good theory” (Lewin, 1952, p.169).

Several theories have shaped and influenced the field of Intercultural Communication. Gudykunst (2005) presents a comprehensive but non-exhaustive summary of several of such theories. Gudykunst organizes them into six distinct categories: (a) theories of communication incorporating culture (e.g., Speech Codes

Theory); (b) theories of communication focusing on cross-cultural variability in communication (e.g., Face Negotiation Theory, Culture-based Conversational Constraints Theory); (c) theories focusing on adaptations in interactions (e.g., Communication Accommodation Theory, Interaction Adaptation Theory); (d) theories focusing on identity (i.e., Identity Management Theory or Communication Theory of Identity); (e) theories focusing on effective communication and decisions (e.g., Theory of Interethnic Communication or Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory of Effective Communication); (f) theories focusing on adjustment and communication (e.g., Cultural Schema Theory or Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory of Strangers' Intercultural Adjustment).

Although all theories bring forward important constructs and dimensions related to intercultural communication, none of these theories truly encompasses all schools of thought into an overarching single theory; perhaps due to the breadth, depth and complexity of the phenomenon. Kim (2005) deplors that:

. . . the field. . . suffers from *disconnectedness* [italics added], making it difficult for individual investigators to gain a clear a cohesive picture of the body of knowledge accumulated over the decades. Couched in various terms such as *culture shock, acculturation, adjustment, assimilation, integration* and *adaptation*, the field is fractured by different perspectives and foci (p. 376).

In addition, Kim (2005) posits that the “one-directional cause-and-effect notion has produced many different and often inconsistent definitions, models, indices and scales” (p. 376). Intercultural communication is thus a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon, and conducting additional research in this field needs not be limited to a

single theoretical framework. Hence, four theories (i.e., Cultural Dimensions Theory, Culture Shock Theory, U-Curve Theory (UCT), and, Acculturation Theory) have been retained to provide needed theoretical perspectives, based upon the following rationales.

Cultural Dimensions Theory builds at the outset a beneficial general context to define the notions of *culture* and *cross-cultural differences*. Moreover, the framework introduces five fundamental dimensions and four critical cultural differences associated with American and Chinese cultures.

Culture Shock Theory provides an essential framework to investigate whether study participants experienced culture shock. Being closely related to the concept of culture shock, the U-Curve Theory (UCT) or model of adjustment is beneficial in investigating informants' potential exposure to all aspects of culture shock. Black and Mendenhall (1991) posit: "When a theoretical framework is imposed, the U-Curve Adjustment Theory has been the one most commonly used" (p. 225). Both Culture Shock Theory and UCT are at the core of the study, and will equip the researcher with the theoretical lenses needed to define proper research perspectives.

Additionally, Acculturation Theory adds needed clarity in a field of investigation affected by a great deal of inconsistencies and disconnectedness (Kim, 2001, 2005). The retained theories have been tested and supported at various levels by empirical evidence.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

For more than three decades, the field of cross-cultural research has been strongly influenced by the seminal work of Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede (1980, 1991, 1999; Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004). Hofstede's greatest contribution to

the field of intercultural communication comes from his identification of four significant cultural dimensions: *Individualism vs. Collectivism*, *Masculinity vs. Femininity*, *Power Distance* and *Uncertainty Avoidance*, embedded in the theoretical framework of his Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede, 1980). Between 1967 and 1973, while working at IBM, Hofstede collected and analyzed cultural data pertaining to 116,000 individuals working in over 50 countries to identify dominant values from different cultures around the globe. Hofstede then aggregated and classified his findings into national cultural dimensions generalized into his Cultural Dimensions Theory (1980). Hofstede's research still constitutes the most comprehensive longitudinal cultural study ever conducted.

Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV):

According to Hofstede (1980), individualistic societies cherish *independence* and see personal choices as more important than communitarian ones. Contrarily, collectivist or group-oriented societies perceive the *best interest of the group* or society at large as more important than individual needs or desires.

Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS):

Hofstede (1980) argues that cultures and societies can be divided in *masculine* and *feminine* ones. Whereas feminine societies value relationships, group harmony and humility, masculine ones tend to favor ambition, force and competition over softer, gentler and more nurturing values.

Power Distance Index (PDI):

Cultures embracing higher levels of power distance tend to value *structure, rules, guidelines* and *codes of conduct* where *authority* and *seniority* matter. Contrarily,

societies valuing lower levels of power distance tend to place less emphasis on power, authority or societal status (Hofstede, 1980).

Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI):

Hofstede's (1980) fourth cultural construct distinguishes between *low* and *high* uncertainty avoidance. According to Hofstede, members of societies with low UAI (PRC) display a greater level of comfort with *uncertainty and ambiguity*, and place less emphasis on written codes. Contrarily, cultures characterized higher levels of UAI tend to value *normality, safety, structure and organization* to minimize risk and uncertainty.

Confucian Dynamism - Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation (LTO):

After conducting additional research, Hofstede and Bond (1988) identified a fifth cultural dimension referred to as *Confucian Dynamism*, which focuses upon the past, present and future time orientation of Confucian values across various cultures. Confucian dynamism distinguishes between Confucian teachings with a future or *long-term* time orientation, (i.e., persistence, endurance, perseverance), ranking relationships according to their status, thrift, sense of shame) and Confucian teachings that tend to value past, present or *short-term* time orientation (i.e., respect for tradition, personal steadiness and stability, protection of one's face, fulfillment of social obligations, favor reciprocity). High Confucian dynamism scores reflect a future orientation, while contrarily low scores indicate a past or present orientation. Empirical findings indicate that Chinese, Thai and Japanese cultures tend to be more future-oriented in terms of Confucian values, whereas American and Canadian cultures tend to have greater past or present orientation.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory represents another suitable framework to compare and contrast the conflicting dimensions of American and Chinese cultural realities, and thus assess some of the cross-cultural factors leading to the cultural shock of American expatriates working in China. The following table lists the mutual scores of the American and Chinese cultures for each of Hofstede's five cultural dimensions.

Table 1

Comparative Scores of American and Chinese Index Scores based upon Hofstede's Cross-cultural Dimensions

	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
Chinese culture *	80	20	66	30	118
U.S. culture **	40	91	62	46	29

Power Distance Index (PDI) based upon surveying of 74 countries and regions

Individualism (IDV) based upon surveying of 74 countries and regions

Masculinity (MAS) based upon surveying of 74 countries and regions

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) based upon surveying of 74 countries and regions

Long-Term Orientation (LTO) based upon surveying of 39 countries and regions

* From research on countries not included in the original IBM study.

** From research on countries included in the original IBM study.

Source: Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

A quick comparison indicates that out of the five criteria, only one (Masculinity vs. Femininity) appears to be comparable between American and Chinese cultures; the other four indicate fairly significant gaps; most particularly in PDI and LTO indexes. These factors provide an important general cross-cultural context when researching Chinese cultural factors affecting the adjustment of ABEs working in the PRC.

Culture Shock Theory

“Culture shock is part of the overseas passage.... It’s like being in an exam twenty-four hours a day.” (Copeland & Griggs, 1985, p. 195).

Fifty years of research in the fields of expatriation and cross-cultural communication have generated an abundant amount of literature, which consistently highlights the unique acculturation challenges faced by and expatriates in overseas assignments. Among all theories developed, two theoretical frameworks, Culture Shock Theory and U-Curve Theory (UCT) have strongly influenced scholarly research on expatriate adjustment.

Culture Shock

Generally speaking, culture shock refers to the emotional stress resulting from living abroad for an extended period of time (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000). Pedersen (1995) refers to culture shock as “the process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar environment” (p. 1). The literature (i.e., Kealey, Protheroe, MacDonald, & Vulpe, 2005; Kohls, 1979) further indicates that culture shock can bring an element of *disorientation* which can negatively affect expatriate managers’ *productivity*. Gaining a greater understanding of the phenomenon, and most particularly within specific cultural contexts (e.g., Chinese cultural milieu) can help organizations better prepare expatriation candidates through the development of more relevant cross-cultural training programs aiming at reducing culture shock and associated levels of lower productivity or work effectiveness.

Anthropologist Kalervo Oberg (1954, 1960) is credited (Furnham, 1988; Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998) with first coining the term *culture shock* after observing the intercultural challenges faced by a sample of American expatriates working overseas. Oberg (1954, 1960) associates cultural shock to the *anxiety* felt by sojourners who have lost native or previous cultural points of reference and have a difficult time orienting themselves in the new culture. Oberg also compares culture shock to a work-related ailment afflicting individuals transplanted into a foreign environment and saw the phenomenon as "...an occupational disease of people who have suddenly been transported abroad" (p. 11). Oberg observes that while some individuals can quickly adjust to the new cultural setting, others cannot and suffer from chronic or permanent debilitation resulting from high stress and psychological distress (Mumford, 1998). Adler (2002) conceives the construct in terms of frustration and confusion resulting from sudden and constant exposure to an excessive amount of unintelligible messages. Ward (2001) sees the phenomenon as a condition by which a given individual is exposed to cultural environment where previously-acquired norms and behaviors prove irrelevant.

Numerous scholars have researched and described the phenomenon (Befus, 1988; Briggs & Hardwood, 1982; Copeland & Furnham, 1988; Gao & Gudykunst, 1990; Griggs, 1985; Oberg 1954, 1960; Pedersen, 1995; Ward & Kennedy, 1992). Briggs and Hardwood (1982) contend that when leaving a familiar cultural setting for a new cultural milieu, a person may become subject to substantial doubts about what appears to be normal and natural. Such uncertainties trigger significant reconsiderations about multiple aspects of daily life, as familiar frames of reference disappear (Hullinger, 1995).

Kaye and Taylor (1997) actually see culture shock as a familiar phenomenon widely experienced by any expatriate manager sent on an overseas mission. They allude to the tension resulting from expatriate exposure to a constant flow of new cultural stimuli and the time needed to develop appropriate responses. They affirm that “all sojourners have to deal with psychological strain, a sense of loss, rejection, confusion, surprise, anxiety and feelings of impotence” (p. 498).

Culture Shock, Culture Fatigue, Language Shock, Personal Shock...

Although culture shock is no longer perceived as a *disease* Oberg (1954, 1960), and many scholars see this phase of cultural adaptation as characterized by *stress*, *frustrations*, *disenchantment* and *disillusion* resulting from multiple stress-inducing factors (Bock, 1970; Kohls, 1979, 1984). Guthrie (1975) proposes the term *cognitive fatigue*, which he associates to the information or *sensory overload* resulting from the mass of new information that must be acquired, processed and utilized in any new cultural environment. Smalley (1963) thinks in terms of *language shock* when highlighting the challenges associated with learning a foreign language and the consequences resulting from not properly communicating in a foreign environment. Byrnes (1966) places emphasis upon *role shock* and argues that immersion into a new culture may lead to changes in social roles and interpersonal relations. Berry (1970) proposes the notion of *acculturative stress* as an alternative to culture shock, arguing that “the notion of shock carries only negative connotations, while stress can vary from positive (eustress) to negative (dis-stress) in valence” (p. 294). Ball-Rokeach (1973) thinks in terms of *pervasive ambiguity*, while Zaharna (1989) suggests the notion of *self-*

shock. Such changes can trigger confusion and ambiguity, and negatively affect one's well-being, self-concept and sense of worthiness. Other scholars (Adelman, 1988; Furnham & Bochner, 1986) suggest that the loss of personal intimacy and closeness with friends and family resulting from expatriation can bring *personal shock*, which they see as a subset of culture shock.

Culture Shock Symptoms

Rhinesmith (1985) sees culture shock as “a generalized state of disorientation often resulting in acute anxiety. From a medical perspective it is a ‘transient neurosis’, or a temporary emotional disorder that reduces normal functioning” (p. 147). Rhinesmith presents a multitude of symptoms that can indicate cultural shock affection; some of these symptoms are: (a) depression, lethargy, and fatigue; (b) irregular sleeping and eating patterns; (c) psychosomatic physical ailments; (d) generalized anxiety and discomfort; and, (e) fear for safety and excessive concerns for hygiene. Kohls (1979) too proposes an extensive list of culture shock symptoms such as: homesickness; boredom; withdrawal; need for excessive amount of sleep; compulsive eating and drinking; irritability; exaggerated cleanliness; marital stress; family tension and conflict; chauvinistic excesses; stereotyping of and hostility toward host nationals; inability to perform work effectively; unexplainable fits of weeping; and, physical ailments (p. 65). Pedersen (1995) suggests six culture shock symptoms: (a) familiar cultural norms and values have disappeared or prove irrelevant; (b) strongly held values are not honored or respected; (c) cross-cultural disorientation leads to anxiety, hostility, anger and/or depression; (d) former norms, behavior and habits are idealized; (e) coping skills seem

irrelevant; and, (f) the condition is perceived as permanent. Adelman (1988) further highlights the importance that culture shock can have with regards to expatriation failure and affirms that *physical* and *psychological disorientation* can weaken the confidence needed by expatriates to cope with a foreign environment.

However, Adler (2002) simply sees culture shock as one's *natural response* to the stress resulting from exposure to a foreign environment. She further highlights a paradox in the fact that some of the most successful international executives are subject to severe cases of culture shock while less effectual managers are less sensitive to the phenomenon. She thus sees culture shock as a positive indicator signaling that expatriates subject to severe culture shock may actually be trying harder than others to immerse themselves in a new culture. Mumford (1998) reinforces Adler's position and affirms that culture shock is by no means an established *psychiatric disorder*.

Culture Shock Contributors

The literature on culture shock suggests that the phenomenon often results from real or objective cross-cultural differences as well as perceived and subjective ones. Such differences manifest themselves through contrasting and, at times, conflicting *attitudes, beliefs, morals, logics, norms, roles, societal structures and values* (Bennett, 1986). Harris and Moran (1991) present a broad assortment of factors leading to cultural shock such as: (a) refusal to discover and accept a new culture; (b) paranoia about being lied to, cheated, robbed, maltreated or wounded; (c) fears related to the cleanliness of food, purity of drinking water; and, (d) fears, concerns and frustrations leading to feelings of helplessness, anger and depression. In his causal diagnosis, Rhinesmith (1985) narrows

down culture shock contributors to two fundamental phenomena: (a) loss of the familiar old environment; and, (b) simultaneous challenges of the new surroundings.

Furnham and Bochner (1986) too suggest a multitude of factors contributing to culture shock and individual reactions to such a shock. For them, psychological traits and attributes, previous exposure to foreign cultures, cultural distance between home and host culture, cultural preparedness, and support from family, friends and social groups all play an important role in an individual's sensitivity to culture shock and one's ability to recover from it. Furnham and Bochner also identify linguistic dissimilarity, social, political and economic dissimilarity and other cultural dissimilarities (i.e., gaps related to norms, values, beliefs, customs, etc.) as cultural shock contributors.

According to Berry (1990, 1994, 1997) five elements affect the association of stress and acculturation: (a) the nature of the host society; (b) the type of acculturation group; (c) the modes of acculturation; (d) demographic and social characteristics of an individual; and, (e) the psychological traits of that individual. The first two factors are extremely relevant to this proposed inquiry, which seeks to explore the cultural nature of Chinese society and possibly uncover potential antecedents leading to culture shock or acculturative stress of a group of American business expatriate informants.

Central to the notion of culture shock is the concept of *stress*. Bhagat and Prien (1996) posit that the cross-cultural differences leading to culture shock ultimately contribute to feelings of loss of control and helplessness, stress and depression. Copeland and Griggs (1985) actually see cultural shock as a consequence of stress overload resulting from a myriad of apparently insignificant day-to-day cultural incidents and confrontations. They remind us that one's ability to perform in the world is a function of

his or her capacity to decipher on a daily basis a multitude of implicit and explicit signs, rules and cues to ensure proper behavior in a given context. The most basic routines taken for granted at home can become cumbersome and stressful within a foreign environment; particularly when individuals cannot properly communicate their needs.

Walton (1990) evokes physiological and physical factors and sees culture shock as a *reaction* to the stress resulting from physiological and physical rewards. Referring to Befus (1988), Hullinger (1995) highlights four level of stress (i.e., *intellectual stress, behavioral stress, emotional stress and physiological problems*). These four levels of stress are usually related and often compounded. Intellectual stress results from constant cultural challenges imposed on the expatriate's mental frame of reference. The daily routines of personal and professional lives in the new cultural context tend to be subject to sharp cognitive and normative contrasts, which bring behavioral stress in addition to intellectual one. Combined, these two types of stress trigger emotional stress, which according to Gao and Gudykunst (1990) is further exacerbated by an expatriate's *uncertainty, lack of security* and resulting *anxiety*. Combined, to important changes in physical environment, diet and time management, all factors can trigger significant physiological problems. Ma (1999) reports that "initial differences in language, concepts, values, familiar signs, and symbols lead to feeling of inadequacy, frustration, and anxiety" (p. 27). The four types of stress associated with culture shock represent a primary cause of premature resignation from international assignments.

In addition, factors such as *materialism* (Birdseye & Hill, 1995), *spousal discontent* (Tung, 1987), *consumerism, situational factors* (i.e., poor cultural preparation) (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black et al., 1991; Tung, 1986), and work-related issues

such as *lack of corporate training and support* (Hetrick, 2002) negatively affect expatriates. Pantelidou and Craig (2006) even affirm that *social support* represents a critical factor when assessing the level of culture shock affecting an expatriate community. However, Triandis (1994) contends that the strongest cases of culture shock usually are often due to substantial *language gaps* (e.g., English versus Mandarin) and to marked conflict patterns between cultures.

It has been established that the duration of culture shock can vary greatly, from several weeks to several months, based upon a number of factors such as the expatriate's interpersonal characteristics, his or her prior experience with international assignments, the length of the expatriation process, the type (i.e., technical, managerial) of mission faced by the expatriate, the location of the mission, cultural conditions found in the host country, spousal and family support, corporate support, and pre-departure training (Adler, 2002; Befus, 1988; Brislin, 1993; Copeland & Griggs, 1985; Kohls, 1979, 1984b; Triandis, 1994). Copeland and Griggs (1985) affirm that individuals exposed to foreign cultures for an extended period of time are more likely to experience culture shock. Contrarily, tourists or occasional visitors are less likely to experience it as they are protected from the foreign culture by not having to perform a multitude of daily tasks such as fixing leaks or repairing shoes, and negotiating for such services according to local dialects and mercantile conditions. Kaye & Taylor (1997) contend that expatriates sent on long missions reported that the culture shock they experienced lasted more than a year before they were able to properly adjust to their new cultural environment.

Some studies (i.e., Mumford, 1998, 2000; Pantelidou & Craig, 2006) imply that women report a greater likeliness to be affected by culture shock than men. Copeland and

Griggs (1985) provide examples of factors negatively women in foreign countries. They use as examples the fact that women are not permitted to drive in Saudi Arabia, and that Belgian women need their husband's written authorization to get a checkbook from a bank. They quote an expatriate who stated: "the wife will cry a bucket of tears". (p. 198). Copeland and Griggs highlight in particular the strong importance of family support to expatriates. They warn that unless they make special efforts to build local friendships, single individuals are more likely to be overwhelmed by culture shock.

Furthermore, Kaye and Taylor (1997) contend that an expatriate's region of origin also affects cultural adaptation. In their study of 128 European and Asian expatriates in China, they uncovered that Asian managers were more likely to suffer from culture shock due to a tendency among Chinese business circles to be more forgiving of cultural mistakes made by Westerners as opposed to non-Chinese Asians.

Phases and Characteristics of Culture Shock

Due to the physiological and physical stress dimensions of culture shock, reactions to the phenomenon can be both complex and numerous. Kohls (1979, 1984) conceives culture shock in terms of *pervasive disorientation*, thus indicating that the phenomenon builds up over time and does not abruptly occur. Copeland and Griggs (1985) refer to culture shock as a "cycle of readjustment" (p. 196), which includes four distinct phases. Their description of the four phases presents a pattern totally consistent with the U-Curve theory. They call the first phase the 'tourist phase'; a phase marked by euphoria. Excitement is so great that it masks the myriad of cultural dissimilarities. However, a second phase soon replaces the initial one as the new culture begins to prevail

over the native one. In this phase curiosity and excitement are progressively replaced by irritation, impatience, frustrations, anger and depression. Two consequences result from this second phase; either the expatriate and dependents return home or they begin to adjust to the new cultural environment and regain self-confidence. Lastly, after experiencing these three subsequent phases, a fourth phase occurs during which expatriates and their families are in a position to truly enjoy their cultural environment.

Taft (1977) introduces six dimensions associated with culture shock: (a) the strain resulting from psychological adaptation needs; (b) a sense of loss or *dispossession* in terms of diminished friendship, worth and assets; (c) feeling of rejection from host nationals; (d) feelings of *confusion* in terms of role expectations, values and self-identity; (e) *surprise, shock, anxiety or anguish* induced by sharp cultural differences; and, (f) feelings of impotence resulting from inability to deal with the new cultural setting.

Scholarly research related to culture shock places primary emphasis on understanding the phenomenon, comprehending its antecedents and defining prevention strategies (Church, 1982). Studies related to culture shock have triggered research on related phenomena (i.e., cross-cultural communication, adjustment, acculturation, etc.). However, more research is needed to understand how culture-specific factors such as the ones associated with Chinese culture (i.e., Guanxi, Mianzi) can contribute to the culture shock of foreign nationals such as AEMs. Gaining such an understanding could lead to the development of more effective training programs aiming at minimizing culture shock for the greatest satisfaction of expatriate managers, dependents and employers.

Basic Reactions to Culture Shock

Rhinesmith (1985) explains that there are typically three basic reactions to culture shock: “*flight, fight, and adaptation*” (p. 149). Individuals opting for a flight strategy tend to refute all factors and people perceived as a cause of culture discomfort. Such individuals tend to blame host nationals and local norms, values, customs and beliefs, and withdraw from intercultural exchange opportunities. This is often the case of diplomats or reporters who tend to confine themselves to cultural enclaves such as diplomatic compounds and Western hotels. Other people had rather fight than escape or adapt. According to Rhinesmith, these individuals respond to new cultural surroundings with hostility and aggression. Such an attitude usually results in isolation from the host environment and is often counterproductive as aggressive sojourners sever themselves from any potential support or assistance from host nationals. Rhinesmith describes the process in terms of *counterdependence* and *misdirected energy*.

The third potential answer to culture shock is cultural adaptation (Rhinesmith, 1985). Sojourners using this *coping mechanism* do not forget their own cultural upbringing; rather, they attempt to understand their emotions, assess the root causes of such feelings and establish effective strategies to understand the new cultural context. Unlike people who choose to fight the host culture, individuals seeking cultural adjustment show *humility, knowledge of self and others* (Rhinesmith, 1985) and seek *interdependence* with the host community.

The benefits resulting from this strategy are multiple. First, expatriates who make all efforts needed to overcome culture shock will adjust to their new environment faster than those who don't. Second, they are also more likely to be happy, which can have

positive consequences upon multiple stakeholders such as dependents, employees, co-workers, host nationals, etc. (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). Second, well-adjusted expatriates are more likely to enjoy their sojourn and complete their professional assignment until due term. They are also more likely to prove effective in their work. This, in turn, can bring related benefits such as organizational trust and support, increased compensation, benefits, promotion, and additional career opportunities. In addition, individual choosing to adapt to a foreign environment, are more likely to seek fruitful interaction with host nationals. At times, well-adapted individuals end up founding bi-cultural families. Perhaps most importantly, effective overcoming of culture shock can be seen as a sign of learning and personal growth (Kim, 2001).

Coping and Culture Shock Management Strategies

Although culture shock is closely associated to various forms of stress and is generally perceived as the negative dimension (Church, 1982) on the U-Curve pattern of cross-cultural adaptation, the phenomenon is *chaordic* (Wheatley, 1999) in nature. In spite of the phenomenon's problematic image, effective cultural shock management can bear significant benefits for both expatriates and their employers. First, it can become a *transformative experience* allowing committed sojourners to transform themselves through self-development and personal growth (P. S. Adler, 1975). Pedersen (1995) sees exposure to culture shock as an opportunity for *growth* and *learning*. Kim (2001) sees many more benefits resulting from effective cultural shock management; some of these benefits are: psychological and emotional well-being, enhanced cognitive, affective and behavioral abilities to interact with HCNs, and progressive development of a cross-

cultural identity enabling sojourners to overcome cultural paradigms and understand their place in the new cultural context or reality. Culture shock can thus be conceived as an opportunity for expatriate managers to test their psychological strength and ability to develop and implement effective coping strategies.

Stahl and Caligiuri (2005) indicate that with regards to expatriate managers, *coping* "...consists of the strategies expatriates use to manage, reduce, or overcome the environmental (e.g., cultural differences) and internal demands (e.g., role conflict) they encounter" (p. 604). Selmer (1999) defines *coping strategies* as "...an individual's efforts to manage a stressful situation" (p. 41). All definitions thus tend to draw attention to the type and amount of initiatives undertaken by expatriates to deal with new, complex and challenging cultural environments, reduce resulting stress, effectively manage situational issues, and successfully adjust to new living and working cultural realities (Feldman & Thompson 1993; Lazarus & Launier, 1978; Selmer, 1999b; Stahl & Caligiuri, 2005).

Copeland and Griggs (1985) contend that culture shock is predictable, patterned and manageable. They affirm that any aware and prepared individual can overcome it. Simons, Vazquez and Harris (1993) suggest three potential reactions to culture shock; (a) *resistance*; (b) *assimilation* or, (c) *acculturation*. Resistance is marked by a refusal to abandon one's culture to accept the norms, values and other components of a new cultural setting. Contrarily, assimilated individuals abandon their own culture to embrace the new one. Acculturation represents an intermediary approach as it involves the progressive discovering and embracing of a new culture combined with the maintenance of one's original culture. Rhinesmith (1985) proposes three general and sequential steps

to address and put an end to cultural shock: (a) *cause diagnosis*; (b) *reaction analysis*, and (c) *intercultural adjustment*.

Winkelman (1994) distinguishes between *universal* and *specific* aspects of cultural shock adaptation. For him, specific aspects pertain to their intents and needs, the personality traits of a given individual, and the cultural and societal characteristics of the foreign environment surrounding that individual. According to Winkelman, the universal dimensions of cultural shock can be dealt with through awareness, crisis management skills, and willingness to accept some levels of personal and behavioral change.

Winkelman does not advocate full or partial assimilation but rather a certain amount of tolerance and mental flexibility, which he calls *cultural relativism*. In addition, Winkelman proposes a series of coping strategies matching a sequential set of issues such as pre-departure training and preparation, transition adjustments personal and social relations, cultural and social interaction rules, and conflict resolution and intercultural effectiveness skills. Ultimately, an expatriate's willingness to learn culturally-relevant behaviors and ability to create problem-solving strategies are essential to overcoming cultural shock and successfully adapting to a new cultural reality.

Kohls (1979) presents a list of interpersonal skills contributing to successful adaptation and the rapid reduction of culture shock. Such traits include: (a) tolerance for ambiguity; (b) low goal/task orientation; open mindedness; (c) non-judgmentalness; empathy; communicativeness; (d) flexibility; adaptability; (e) curiosity; sense of humor; warmth in human relationships; (f) motivation; (g) self-reliance; (h) strong sense of self; (i) tolerance for differences; (j) perceptiveness; and, (k) ability to fail. For him, *sense of humor*, *low goal/task orientation* and *ability to fail* represent the most critical skills.

Kohls perceives *humor* as the best defense against frustrations, anger and despair. In addition, Kohls sees American expatriates' *intrinsic optimism* and *ambition* as a major cause of failure as such characteristics tend to create unrealistic and unattainable goals. *Tolerance for failure* is also critical because most expatriates sent of overseas missions have had successful careers and have never experience failure. Yet, failure is inherent to many aspects of international missions; thus, inability to accept failure can lead to severe physiological trauma.

Copeland and Griggs (1985) highlight the importance of *adaptive abilities* and propose a series of ten strategies to anticipate and effectively deal with culture shock: (a) do your homework and thoroughly prepare before deployment; (b) be humble and make genuine attempts at understanding new culture rationales; (c) develop friendships; (d) avoid whiners and get out of the "American ghetto" (p. 202); (e) don't take your spouse, partner or family for granted; (f) make effective use of your time. Use it to discover and appreciate the new culture; (g) face reality; (h) avoid home comparisons as they can only add to frustrations and alienate hosts; (i) stop trying to be like or loved at all costs; and, (j) be mindful of the dangers of culture shock remedies such as drugs and alcohol.

Theoretical Weaknesses

Like many theories, Culture Shock Theory suffers from weaknesses. Furnham and Bochner (1986) contend that a major weakness comes from the fact that all theories related to culture shock phenomenon were "...applied to the culture-shock literature rather than theories arising from it" (p. 221). Furnham and Bochner further deplore that cultural shock-related theories suffer from lack of testing and empirical research. They

allude to the fact that the phenomenon has been extensively researched in various disciplines (i.e., psychology) and simply transposed to the field of intercultural communication. For Furnham and Bochner more empirical evidence is needed to strengthen the theory; in addition, such evidence should be integrated into a coherent theoretical framework. Furnham and Bochner state: “any good theory of culture shock should integrate known empirical findings within a logically consistent and parsimonious framework” (p. 231). Pedersen (1995) further contends that “most of the research on culture shock has been quantitative in design, gathering objective data from individuals to test one or another theory or explanation of culture shock” (p. 11). These observations too support our intent to add to the literature by conducting an exploratory study.

Although Furnham (1988) conducted a thorough review of culture shock literature and effectively argued against the generally-negative perception of culture shock, Pedersen (1995) argues that very few researchers have taken the time to research the positive aspects of culture shock theory, and most particularly the benefits resulting from culture shock-induced needs for change and adaptation.

Another limitation of cultural shock theory comes from the supposition that the phenomenon is inexorable. It is possible that individuals who grew up in multi-cultural environments (i.e., children of frequently-relocated diplomatic or military personnel) developed strong acculturative capabilities and can enter a new cultural environment with no or limited exposure to culture shock.

Berry (1970) coins the concept of *acculturative stress* as a substitute to the notion of culture shock. A primary concern was the fact that “the notion of *shock* carries only negative connotations, while stress can vary from positive (*eustress*) to negative (*dis-*

stress) in valence.” (p. 294). Thus, according to Berry, the notion of stress more appropriately reflects the positive and negative dimensions of acculturation. Moreover, the concept of stress is embedded in clinical theoretical frameworks while the notion of shock is not. Lastly, Berry argues that the adjective ‘cultural’ implies reference to a single culture, while acculturation contrarily implies interplay between two cultures.

In addition, culture shock theory suffers from generalization challenges. The term *sojourner* encompasses a broad diversity of realities. For example, the cultural, work and living conditions faced by expatriate executives, students learning abroad, migrant workers, diplomats or political refugees vary greatly. Although one can assume that all face at some point some form of culture shock, potential empirical evidence related to a given reality could not be generalized to all sojourners.

Lastly, much of the existing research has been ethnocentric in nature. More research needs to be conducted to inquire about the perceptions that host nationals hold vis-à-vis the culture shock of sojourners. Researching the consequences that the culture shock of sojourners bears upon host countries, culture and nationals might also bring value to the field of intercultural communication.

Context: The U-Curve Theory (UCT) or Model of Adjustment

First proposed in the mid-50’s, U-Curve Theory a.k.a. the U-Curve model of adjustment has been a compelling and enduring but nevertheless controversial research framework, which attempts to describe the psychological adjustment of individuals exposed to foreign cultures. Lysgaard (1955) is generally credited (Black & Mendenhall, 1990) with first observing a U-shaped pattern of adjustment while studying the

intercultural challenges faced by 200 Norwegian students studying in the U.S. The pattern came from Lysgaard's observation of three successive phases of adjustment; namely *initial adjustment*, *crisis* and *regained adjustment*. Although Lysgaard did not formally present a U-Curve Theory, his work has allowed other researchers (i.e., P. S. Adler, 1975; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kleinberg & Hull, 1979; Oberg, 1960; Nash, 1991; Smalley, 1963; Torbion, 1982) to support the concept and propose similar models. Capitalizing upon Lysgaard's observations, Oberg (1960) introduces four constructs (i.e., honeymoon, crisis, recovery, adjustment) associated with a U-Curve model of cultural adjustment. Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963a) add *re-entry* as a fifth element and propose a W-Curve model of intercultural adjustment by considering the challenges faced by expatriates returning to their home culture.

The U-Curve Theory of Adjustment states that when entering a foreign culture, individuals progressively experience four successive phases of psychological, emotional and socio-cultural adaptation. The first phase (i.e., honeymoon) (Oberg, 1960) refers to a state of *general contentment* and *great excitement* (Walton, 1990), or *elation* (Richardson, 1974) about a newly-discovered culture. However, this initial phase of cultural enthusiasm is progressively replaced by a period of *disenchantment*, *frustration* and *disillusionment* (Kealey, 1978; Walton, 1990) referred to as *crisis* (Oberg, 1954, 1960) or *culture shock* (Brown, 1980; Kaye & Taylor, 1997). In this second phase, individuals must work extremely hard to cope with the stress, anxiety and uncertainty arising from exposure to the new cultural environment (Black et al., 1991). As time goes by, both behavior and mental modeling start adapting to the new cultural reality until the individual reaches progressive *recovery* (Oberg, 1954, 1960; Richardson, 1974) or

adjustment (Smalley, 1963), which allows them to understand and accept the cultural norms and values of the host country. Finally, when sufficient time has elapsed, the individual reaches a level of *adaptation* (Brown, 1980), *acculturation* (Richardson, 1974) or *bi-culturalism* (Smalley, 1963), characterized by a strong ability to successfully behave, function and perform in the foreign cultural environment (Adler, 1986; Church, 1982; Hannigan, 1990; Hullinger, 1995; Gao & Gudykunst, 1990; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Black & Mendenhall, 1990).

Scholarly Models & Dissensions

Due to a multitude of factors, there appears to be a great deal of semantic confusion in the field of intercultural communication. This is particularly apparent when considering the definition or meaning of constructs such as *adaptation*, *adjustment*, *acculturation* or *culture shock*. First, different scientific traditions and fields of inquiry (i.e., anthropology, sociology, psychology, psychiatry, communication, management) have looked at the phenomena with different interests and paradigms, and from different theoretical perspectives. There also exists a gap between theoretical conceptualizations and support from empirical investigations. Whereas some theoretical models have been supported through empirical evidence, others have not. The U-Curve model of adaptation is a good example. Even though the theoretical assumption has been quite popular, empirical evidence supporting the concept has been, at best, inconsistent. Moreover, different scholars investigating the constructs came up with similar conclusions they often labeled similar dimensions with different names. For example, some scholars see the terms ‘adaptation’, ‘adjustment’ and ‘acculturation’ as synonymous; others don’t.

Kim (2001) contends "...the field of cross-cultural adaptation continues to be in need of interdisciplinary integration" (p. xi). This theoretical turmoil is particularly apparent in the literature associated with the culture shock aspect of intercultural communication.

Oberg (1954, 1960), Smalley (1963), Richardson (1974) and Kealey (1989) all investigated culture shock as a phenomenon. All four express the positive nature of sojourners' initial exposure to a foreign culture. Yet, Oberg calls the first phase *incubation*; Smalley names it *fascination*; Richardson refers to it as *elation*; and Kealey calls it *exploration*. Similarly, the four scholars highlight the troublesome nature of the second phase. Yet, Oberg calls it *crisis*; Smalley labels it *hostility*; Richardson names it *depression* and Kealey calls it *frustration*. The four researchers further agree that as they get acquainted with the host environment, sojourners progressively overcome the stress, anxiety and negative feelings associated with the second phase and enter a third one. Oberg refers to this third phase as *recovery*; Smalley calls it *adjustment*; Richardson adopts Oberg's labeling and calls it *recovery*; while Kealey sees it as *coping*. Lastly, the four researchers share similar views on the positive dimension of the subsequent and final stage of the cycle; yet, Oberg calls it *full recovery*; Smalley names it *biculturalism*; Richardson calls it *acculturation*; and Kealey sees it as *adjustment*.

This simple analysis indicates that four scholars who agree on the four basic stages of the U-Curve model of adjustment managed to use 14 labels, with a perfect match for only one of such labels as both Oberg and Richardson refer to the second phase of culture shock as *recovery*. Moreover, Smalley and Kealey manage to use the same label (i.e., adjustment) for two different phases; Smalley uses the term to describe the third phase of the U-Curve, while Kealey uses it to describe the fourth one.

In addition, some scholars changed their labeling from one publication to another. For example, Oberg (1954) refers to the four phases of intercultural adaptation as *incubation, crisis, recovery* and *full recovery*, while Oberg (1960) refers to the same phases as *honeymoon, crisis, recovery* and *adjustment*.

Other researchers (i.e., P. S. Adler, 1975; Pedersen, 1995) capitalize upon previous research but feel compelled to add a fifth dimension to previous models. Yet, they once again manage to use different labels. P. S. Adler (1975) refers to the five phases of intercultural adjustment as *contact, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy* and *independence*, while (Pedersen 1995) refers to the five phases as *honeymoon, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy* and *interdependence*. In this instance, the two scholars use three common labels and two distinct ones to describe the first and final phases of the acculturation process.

An important consideration comes from the need to distinguish at the outset between two opposite understandings of culture shock. While some researchers use the term culture shock to describe the *entire cross-cultural adaptation cycle*, others reserve the term to describe the crisis or disintegration *stage* or *phase* of the adjustment cycle. For example, Pedersen (1995) sees culture shock as a process encompassing five distinct phases: (a) honeymoon; (b) disintegration; (c) reintegration; (d) autonomy; and, (e) interdependence. Contrarily, Brown (1980) and Torbion (1994) use the term 'culture shock' to depict the *arising anxiety* resulting from progressive discovery of a new cultural reality, and one's inability to properly function in that new context. Truly, it seems far more appropriate to use the term 'shock' itself to depict the crisis (Oberg, 1954, 1960), hostility (Smalley, 1963) or frustrations (Kealey, 1978) felt by sojourners when

psychological stress arises than to describe the entire cycle of adjustment as Pedersen (1995) does. Out of the five phases (honeymoon, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy and interdependence) proposed by Pedersen in his cycle of culture shock, only one element (disintegration) conveys a notion of psychological shock or stress; the remaining terms all have positive connotations.

Greater confusion occurs when considering the 11 cultural shock models (See Table 2) presented in the literature. The 11 models account for 34 constructs labeling the four or five phases associated with the culture shock phenomenon (P. S. Adler, 1975; Brown, 1980; Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Kealey, 1989; Mohamed, 1997; Oberg, 1954, 1960; Pedersen, 1995; Richardson, 1974; Smalley, 1963; and Torbion, 1994).

Table 2

Culture Shock Models

Oberg (1954)	Oberg (1960)	Smalley (1963)	Richardson (1974)
1. Incubation 2. Crisis 3. Recovery 4. Full recovery	1. Honeymoon 2. Crisis 3. Recovery 4. Adjustment	1. Fascination 2. Hostility 3. Adjustment 4. Biculturalism	1. Elation 2. Depression 3. Recovery 4. Acculturation
Garza-Guerrero (1974)	Kealey (1978)	Brown (1980)	Adler (1975)
1. Cultural encounter 2. Reorganization 3. New identity	1. Exploration 2. Frustration 3. Coping 4. Adjustment	1. Euphoria and excitement 2. Culture shock 3. Culture stress 4. Adaptation	1. Contact 2. Disintegration 3. Reintegration 4. Autonomy 5. Independence
Torbion (1994)	Pedersen (1995)	Mohamed (1997)	
1. Fascination 2. Culture shock 3. Satisfaction 4. Subjective adjustment	1. Honeymoon 2. Disintegration 3. Reintegration 4. Autonomy 5. Interdependence	1. Orientation and autonomy 2. Transitions of self-worth 3. Consolidation 4. Competence and integrative maturity	

Out of the 34 terms used to describe culture shock stages, only nine match. For example, the terms 'crisis', 'honeymoon', 'disintegration', 'fascination', 'recovery' and 'reintegration' are only used by two of the 11 scholars to describe similar stages in the culture shock process. The following observations are of particular significance. First, while nine of the 11 models present culture shock as a process, two (i.e., Brown, 1980; Torbion, 1994) see culture shock as one of four acculturation stages. The terms *acculturation* and *adaptation*, which usually refer to a process, are seen as culture shock stages by two scholars (i.e., Brown, 1980; Richardson, 1974). Similarly, the term *adjustment*, which inherently conveys a process dimension, is used to describe culture shock stages by three researchers (i.e., Kealey, 1978; Oberg, 1960; Smalley, 1963). Although Smalley originally saw adjustment as the third phase of culture shock, Oberg and Kealey see it as the fourth and final stage, the one indicating full acculturation. Furthermore, some scholars (i.e., Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Mohamed, 1997) simply disregard existing phraseology and propose their own terms to describe long-described phenomena. One can then see how scholarly dissensions and interpretations have fractured the acculturation literature.

Ward (1996) summarizes both the complexity and theoretical dissensions associated with the field and states:

...theory and research on acculturation continue to be plagued by fundamental conceptual and methodological problems. Few attempts have been made to integrate the massive and expanding literature that is punctuated by *sustained debates* [italics added] as to the most theoretical frameworks for the investigation

of acculturation and by the *lack of agreement* [italics added] about the definition of key constructs. (p. 125)

Ultimately, the U-Curve Theory of adjustment posits that expatriates must cope with *shifts* in mental programming (Hofstede, 1980) and related behavioral relevance to a new cultural setting. In turn, evolution in clarity of mental frame and appropriateness of behavior drive the progressive transition from honeymoon to full acculturation. Whereas the honeymoon phase is characterized by an unchallenged mental programming and awkward behavior in the new cultural setting, clarity of the mental frame of reference and adequate behavior distinguish the well-adjusted or fully–acculturated expatriate (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Gao & Gudykunst, 1990; Hannigan, 1990; Hullinger, 1995; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). In other words, successful cross-cultural adjustment requires the effective of repositioning of state of mind and associated behavior.

Theoretical Weaknesses

After reviewing U-curve-related literature Church (1982) finds conflicting data as half of the 14 studies considered identified U-curve patterns of adjustment and half did not. Church thus concludes that U-Curve Theory evidence is weak and inconclusive. Church further argues that all expatriates do not necessarily begin their overseas sojourn in a state of delight or euphoria; some are actually fearful or apprehensive before their journey begins. Nash (1991) blames the inappropriateness of research designs associated with past studies in properly testing the U-Curve Theory. Through a longitudinal study, Nash tested the U-Curve model and could not find sufficient variability between experimental and control groups to support the U-Curve hypothesis. Other researchers

(i.e., Berry & Sam, 1997; Kealey, 1989; Pedersen, 1995; Ward & Kennedy, 1996b; Ward et al., 1998) simply find the U-Curve model too simplistic and too inconsistent to provide a reliable and durable theoretical framework. Ward et al. (2001) in particular deplore the model's primary emphasis on psychological adjustment at the expense of socio-cultural adjustment (Berardo, 2006).

Yet, while such scholars reject the theory, others (Adler, 2002; Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Stening, 1979) support it. For example, Black and Mendenhall state that research on cross-cultural management and the related sub-area of cross-cultural adjustment research "has largely been conducted from an atheoretical perspective" (p. 225), and do bemoan the fact that scarcity of thorough reviewing of empirical literature "has allowed scholars to accept or reject the theory on grounds other than that of empirical evidence" (p. 225). They argue that the model may prove most relevant when considered from a social learning theory perspective. Yet, after conducting a systematic review of empirical literature, Black and Mendenhall found that in spite of the fact that only two studies were longitudinal in nature and ten were short of statistical evidence, twelve out of eighteen scholarly studies did identify a U-Curve pattern of cross-cultural adjustment supporting a U-Curve model of adjustment. Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) argue that the "the U-Curve has been on-trial now for almost 40 years..." (p. 82) and wonders why the model has stood for so long in spite of criticisms and empirical evidence scarcity. Ward et al. (2001) answer by affirming that *intuitive appeal, occasional support* and *lack of relevant alternatives* all contribute to the resilience of the U-Curve Theory of Adjustment.

Berardo (2006) and La Brack and Bernardo (2007) indicate that although often criticised for a shortage of empirical and longitudinal evidence, the U-Curve model continues to be widely used in scholarly research and related applications, most particularly in studies associated with culture shock and cultural adjustment. Berardo deplores however that the controversies associated with the U-Curve are seldom presented by researchers referring to such a model. Black and Mendenhall (1991) further affirm: “when a theoretical framework is imposed, the U-Curve has been one of the most commonly used” (p. 225). For the purpose of this study, we will therefore consider their aphorism and conduct our study by retaining the UCT conceptual model as it provides a framework linking ‘culture shock’ and ‘cultural adjustment’; the two constructs most closely associated with this inquiry.

Summary

Since its inception, the culture shock phenomenon has been viewed as intrinsically associated to sojourn processes such as migration and expatriation. Whether considered as a stage in the overall acculturation cycle (i.e., crisis phase of the U-Curve) or the entire cultural adaptation process itself (i.e., entire U-Curve), understanding the phenomenon and preparing for its potentially negative consequences (i.e., stress, anxiety, depression) is of extreme importance to business expatriates and their employers. Expatriates families also hold a significant stake in the process as many an expatriate family has been affected by the negative effects of acculturative stress. Nevertheless, due to the deep mental and psychological dimensions of the phenomenon, it is not infrequent for individuals not to realize that they are being affected until it is too late. This

researcher experienced in his own family an example of divorce resulting from a spouse being unable to cope with culture shock experienced in the Chinese cultural context.

In addition, MNCs and other expatriate employers, and most particularly their HR departments, own a substantial level of responsibility in effective cultural shock prevention and management. First, the crisis phase of culture shock represents the riskiest phase on the adaptation U-Curve. The honeymoon, recovery and adjustment phases bear positive connotations as they tend to represent sojourners' intrinsic or relative contentment with the new cultural reality. Contrarily, the various forms of stress associated with the crisis or culture shock stage increase the likeliness of mission abandonment and premature home return, which can in turn trigger multiple negative consequences (i.e., job resignation, ruined careers, divorces, higher financial and organizational costs, etc.). It is therefore critical for an organization to carefully support expatriates at a critical period of their overall adaptation to new cultural contexts as lack of understanding or support may cause damage to both employee and employer.

Although the clinical view of culture shock initially treated the phenomenon as an illness, more recent views see it as a learning and growth opportunity. Culture shock does not have to lead to divorce, premature mission abandonment, company resignation and, ultimately, higher hard and soft costs for all involved. Culture shock is essentially a chaotic phenomenon; out of stress, anxiety, and turmoil can arise intercultural, personal and professional growth for expatriates and those associated to their overseas experience.

Supporting expatriate managers to help them anticipate, prepare for and overcome cultural shock challenges is thus essential. MNCs and international HR executive bear a critical stake in that process. Selecting the right expatriation candidates, granting them

proper cross-cultural training, involving their dependents in the training and mission preparation processes, maintaining close communication and supporting them adequately throughout their mission, and ensuring an effective and meaningful re-entry process, represent critical aspects of culture shock minimization process.

Such an approach will strengthen expatriates through renewed confidence, enhanced intercultural communication abilities and ultimately greater work effectiveness. In turn, these characteristics can create value for both expatriates and their employers through successful mission accomplishment, reduced expatriation costs and effective transposition of gained knowledge to other expatriates and assignments. Enhanced intercultural relations with all contacts established in the host culture are extremely important as well. Tarnished individual or corporate reputations can prove detrimental and may require much time and effort to repair. Hence, why not do the right thing at the outset by maximizing an expatriate's ability to properly cope with acculturative stress and accomplish a successful mission?

Organizations can choose among a broad array of strategies (i.e., effective candidate selection and training, HR and operational support, coaching and mentoring, support and encouragement from senior management) to help expatriate managers deal with cultural shock. Further, by allowing expatriates to anticipate and prepare for intercultural challenges, CCT has proven to be one of the most effective cultural shock management tools.

Acculturation Theory

Berry (1980, 1994) brings needed clarity to some of the semantic confusion shown in the literature, most particularly with regards to the notions of acculturation, adaptation and adjustment, by properly defining and linking the concepts in his Acculturation Theory. Berry's Theory of Acculturation essentially implies that individuals culturally conditioned through the culture of their upbringing will undergo, when exposed to a different culture, behavioral shifts (i.e., changes in eating habits) and, at a deeper psychological level, acculturative stress such as stress, anxiety or depression. Intercultural adaptation is a consequence of this transformative process.

Berry, (1980) conceives acculturation as a multidimensional phenomenon, which includes three main sequences: (a) *physical contact* between members of different cultures; (b) *conflict*; and, (c) *adaptation*. According to Berry, dimensions of contact can vary according to the purpose, nature, duration and permanence of contact. All aspects of contact can impact the acculturation process. The second dimension, conflict, pertains to the inherent resistance that individuals exposed to a foreign culture for a long period of time experience. Having being conditioned by an initial cultural context, individuals reflexively resist any intercultural reconsideration of their native culture. The last phase of the acculturation process, adaptation, pertains to strategies aiming at minimizing or resolving the conflict. The three constructs, contact, conflict and adaptation, add important dimensions to the study as it attempts to uncover Chinese cultural elements that may contribute to the culture shock of AEMs and negatively affect their adaptation.

Within the context, of this study, the value of Acculturation Theory is fivefold. First, Berry explains the evolution and thus the resulting theoretical perspectives and dissensions associated with research on cross-cultural adaptation. Second, the theory clearly highlights the multiple semantic consequences resulting from scholarly dissensions. Third, the theory brings needed clarity and some level of integration to a disconnected field in need of interdisciplinary integration (Kim, 2001; Ward, 1996;). In addition, the theory distinguishes between psychological and socio-cultural forms of adaptation; this is an important distinction as the study focuses upon three degrees of socio-cultural adjustment. Lastly, these multiple dimensions provide a needed framework to place this study in proper contextual and theoretical perspective.

Cross-cultural Adaptation

As a phenomenon, cross-cultural adaptation has been researched throughout the 20th Century and has received considerable academic interest in the U.S. and other nations with large immigrant populations (Kim, 2001; Kim & Gudykunst, 1988). Kim (2001) remarks that although such depth and length of investigation have provided the field with a wealth of data, insights and findings, “it suffers from increased disconnectedness and confusion” (p. 11) and it is “difficult for individual investigators to gain a clear picture of the body of knowledge accumulated over the decades” (p. 11).

For Berry (2006), the very nature of the acculturative transformation process and the conscious or psychological efforts produced by individuals exposed to intercultural contact lead to cross-cultural adaptation. Adaptation refers to “... the relatively stable changes that take place in an individual or group in response to external demands.” (p.

295). For Berry, adaptation must thus be distinguished from adjustment; whereas adjustment (i.e., assimilative adjustment) implies positive adaptation to a new culture, adaptive behavior can vary from poor to successful adaptation. This is an important distinction as the study will research Chinese cultural antecedents preventing the adjustment or effective adaptation of ABEs to the Chinese cultural milieu.

According to Berry (1980), adaptation itself is a complex construct, which can occur through multiple psychological dimensions such as: (a) *language*; (b) *cognition*; (c) *personality*; (d) *identity*; (e) attitude; and, (f) *acculturative stress*. Willingness to learn a foreign language is an obvious representation of one's intent to prevent potential intercultural conflict through enhanced communication. Such concepts are central to culture shock and acculturation theories. Expatriates are essentially business professionals who must, for previously established reasons, willingly or reluctantly allow new cultural realities to alter their own cultural conditioning. Reluctance to do so can potentially inflate the conflict, while triggering negative consequences (e.g., stress, anxiety, and post abandonment). Contrarily, expatriates who make genuine efforts to understand and respect intercultural variations are more likely to successfully adapt to their surroundings and benefit their mission. Again, Berry's observations prove useful as this inquiry focuses upon the potential interplay of the acculturative stress (culture shock) and adaptive dynamics of American expatriate managers working in mainland China.

Multiple Dimensions of Research on Cross-cultural Adaptation

Macro-level and Micro-level Perspectives

Kim (2001) affirms that most cross-cultural adaptation understandings can be essentially divided into two basic approaches; namely *macro-level* and *micro-level* perspectives. Macro-level observations have been the preferred approach of anthropologists and sociologists who focused their cross-cultural adaptation research upon groups, group values and group dynamics, while paying little attention to individuals within these groups. Due to their main emphasis upon group dynamics, macro-level views are at times referred to as group or group-level perspectives. Contrarily, social psychologists have placed most of their research emphasis upon individuals, and most particularly the intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences of individuals exposed to new cultural environments; micro-level and individual-level perspectives are thus considered synonymous (Kim, 2001).

Short and Long-term Perspectives of Adaptation

The literature on cross-cultural adaptation further distinguishes between studies focusing on *short* and *long-term adaptation* of sojourners (Kealey, 1989; Ruben & Kealey, 1979; Ward et al. 1998). Within this framework, expatriation studies emphasize short-term adaptation while research on emigration or assimilation is considered of long-term nature. In addition, the literature shows that cross-cultural adaptation research has considered multiple fields of inquiry, such as sojourners' attitude toward the host society, psychological and emotional problems, intercultural competence, intercultural effectiveness, coping, rewards, benefits and satisfaction

Negative & Positive Views of Cross-cultural Adaptation

In addition to the distinctions made between macro vs. micro and short-term vs. long-term theoretical perspectives, the literature encompasses a broad spectrum of perspectives ranking outcomes from highly negative ones (i.e., depression, mental and physical illness) to positive ones (i.e., personal transformation, bi-culturalism) (Berry, Kim & Boski, 1988).

One school of thought focuses on the clinical aspects of adaptation and sees the construct as a *disease* with multiple symptoms and consequences that must be treated, like any illness would. Contrarily, a second perspective sees intercultural adaptation as a *learning opportunity* leading to personal growth. Early views of sojourn conceptualized the phenomenon as a negative one; an experience closely associated to psychological and social troubles. However, more recent research has shifted emphasis toward the beneficial aspects of sojourn, and most particularly the personal growth resulting from exposure to foreign cultures (Kim, 2001).

Throughout the second half of the 20th Century, much of the literature on intercultural adaptation has been dominated by the *problematic* or disease view of cross-cultural encounters. Kim (2001) affirms that: “Most investigators have tended to view the intercultural experiences of sojourners mainly as undesirable, justifying their studies as scientific efforts to find ways to help ease such predicaments” (p. 16). As a phenomenon, culture shock fits the disease or harmful perspectives of intercultural adaptation. Oberg (1960), who first coined the term *culture shock* defined the phenomenon as the “anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (p. 177). This view is also a common denominator to the numerous studies investigating the

culture shock-related patterns (i.e., U-Curve, J-Curve, and W-Curve) of adjustment (Anderson, 1994; Bennett, 1977; Bock, 1970; Brown, 1980; Kohls, 1979; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963a; Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1954, 1960; Pedersen, 1995; Zahama, 1989).

While psychologists and other clinical scientists have placed much emphasis upon the negative dimensions of intercultural adaptation, others (e.g., P. S. Adler, 1975; Kim, 2001; Ruben, 1983) have highlighted the beneficial or 'growth and learning' aspects of the phenomenon. Ruben (1983) posits that exposure to intercultural challenges may actually strengthen individuals and prompt them to produce efforts needed for proper adaptation. Similarly, P. S. Adler (1975) places emphasis on the transitional aspect (i.e., transition shock) of adaptation and sees the process as an opportunity for a sojourner to learn, grow and discover oneself. Adler describes adaptation as a transition from "a state of low self- and cultural awareness to a state of high self- and cultural awareness" (p. 15).

Of particular significance is the fact that even scholars who investigated the culture shock phenomenon and described early phases in terms of crisis (Oberg, 1954, 1969); hostility (Smalley, 1963); depression (Richardson, 1974); frustration (Kealey, 1978); disintegration (P. S. Adler, 1975; Pedersen, 1995) ended up describing the following phases of the culture shock process as recovery (Oberg, 1954, 1969; Richardson, 1974); adjustment (Smalley, 1963); and, acculturation (Richardson, 1974). The semantic variation indicates recognition of a shift from negative to positive states, and indirectly supports the positive dimensions of the culture shock phenomenon. This too contributes to the appeal of the culture shock theoretical model as it provides a research framework encompassing both the negative and positive aspects of acculturation with particular emphasis upon factors associated with acculturative change.

Intercultural Adjustment

Various scholars (i.e., Black, 1988; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Church, 1982; Grove & Torbion, 1985; Oberg, 1960) have researched the factors that constitute or contribute to cross-cultural adjustment. Grove and Torbion (1985) define adjustment as “the process of getting through the culture shock phase, gaining the necessary understanding, learning appropriate behaviors, resolving uncertainty, overcoming intellectual and behavioral stress, and regaining a sense of mastery and self-esteem is often described as intercultural adjustment” (p. 214).

Black and Gregersen (1991) define the term as “the degree of psychological comfort with various aspects of a host country” (p. 463). They contend that while early researchers (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Oberg, 1960; Torbion, 1982) saw cross-cultural adjustment as *unidimensional* construct like job satisfaction or organizational commitment, subsequent research (Black, 1988; Black & Stephen, 1989) characterized it as a *multidimensional* phenomenon linking *anticipatory* and *in-country* adjustments.

Berry (1980, 1994) explains that adaptation is a construct used to denote both acculturative *strategies* and *outcomes*. Within this framework, various adaptive strategies can lead to various outcomes. Berry further explains that at the individual level, three basic adaptation strategies have been established; those are known as *adjustment*, *reaction* and *withdrawal*. According to Berry (1994), the adjustment strategy represents individual changes aiming at establishing *fit* or *harmony* between an individual and his or her cultural environment by reducing the potential for cross-cultural divergences and conflict. Throughout the literature, this understanding is the one that most frequently characterizes adjustment as a phenomenon.

Although some scholars (Berry, 1994; Hawes & Kealey, 1981) make a distinction between the notions of acculturation, adjustment and adaptation, others (i.e., Aycan, 1997; Black & Mendenhall, 1990, 1991; Church, 1982; Grove & Torbiörn, 1985; Hanigan 1990; Kim, 1988; Kim & Gudykunst, 1988a; Taft, 1977) do not, and the three concepts are often employed interchangeably in the literature to refer to both process and outcomes. Hannigan (1990) even states:

...the terms adjustment, adaptation, acculturation and assimilation describe change that occurs when individuals or groups have contact with a different culture. These terms are not clearly differentiated. In some cases that are used interchangeably; however, some theorists differentiate among them (p. 92).

Supporting Hannigan's contention, Hullinger (1995) links the notions of adjustment and adaptation and affirms that "both refer to the accommodation that a sojourner makes to a new culture, bringing attitudes and behavior in line with the new culture, and resulting into increased effectiveness" (p. 16). This researcher will embrace Hannigan's and Hullinger's arguments and consider the two terms synonymous.

Psychological vs. Socio-cultural Adjustment

Although some scholars (i.e., Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1992) argue for greater disassociation of the two constructs, cross-cultural adjustment can fundamentally be divided into two main aspects: (a) *psychological adjustment*; and, (b) *socio-cultural adjustment* (Kealey, 1989; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Searle & Ward, 1990; Selmer, 2005a; Ward & Kennedy, 1992, 1993; Ward & Searle, 1991).

Having originated in the clinical and social-psychology traditions, psychological adjustment attaches much importance to variables such as *personality, life change, stress, anxiety, depression, fatigue, physical illness coping, and social support* (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1992; Ward et al., 2001). Contrarily, socio-cultural adjustment is mainly concerned with factors associated with contact and communication between members of different cultures. It is thus closely associated to *in-country adjustment*, itself separated from *anticipatory adjustment* (Black et al., 1991; Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1992, 1993; Ward et al., 2001).

Berry (2006) places great emphasis upon the multiple dimensions of the adaptation phenomenon; a theoretical stand that has been well supported in the literature (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward, 1996; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Berry posits “psychological adaptation largely involves one’s psychological and physical well-being... while socio-cultural adaptation refers to how well and acculturating individual is able to manage daily life in the new cultural context” (p. 295). This too constitutes an important observation as this study focuses upon the socio-cultural adaptation dimensions resulting from the culture shock or acculturative stress of ABEs working in China.

Ward et al. (2001) contend: “An evolving programme [*sic*] of research has demonstrated that psychological and socio-cultural forms of adaptation are conceptually related but empirically distinct. They derive from different theoretical foundations; they are predicted by different types of variables; and they exhibit different patterns of variation overtime” (p. 42).

The literature further establishes that both a healthy psychological condition and healthy interactions with members of a different society ultimately lead to effective

socio-cultural adjustment (Kealey, 1989; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1992).

Known Antecedents of Intercultural Adjustment

The literature indicates that adjusting to a new culture can be taxing or invigorating based upon a broad array of dimensions and phenomena. It presents a broad array of antecedents associated with the phenomenon.

After investigating organizational processes and procedures associated with expatriation (i.e., personnel selection, training, etc.), Tung (1981) contends that cultural adjustment is a function of four factors, namely: (a) *technical competence*; (b) *personality traits*; (c) *understanding of local conditions*; and, (d) *family adjustment*. However, Tung sees the inability of an expatriate's spouse to properly adjust to a new cultural setting as a primary cause of expatriate failure. While Black and Stephens (1989) further support Tung's assertions, Black and Gregersen (1991) emphasize the importance of communication between expatriate, spouse and organization to proper adjustment.

Hawes and Kealey (1981) posit that, sorted by importance, *interpersonal skill in intercultural interactions*, *self-confidence*, and *realistic expectations prior to departure* can be considered effective predictors of intercultural adjustment success. Grove and Torbion (1985) perceive cross-cultural adjustment as a four-stage process encompassing: (a) *clarity of mind*; (b) *frame of reference*; (c) *applicability of behavior*; and, (d) *subjective standard of adequacy*.

After a thorough investigation of empirical literature Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) proposed a model highlighting four dimensions associated with effective cross-

cultural adjustment: (a) the *self-oriented* dimension; (b) the *others' oriented* dimension, (c) the *perceptual* dimension; and, (d) the *cultural toughness* dimension.

Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie, and Young (1986) associate three constructs to effective intercultural adaptation and see *personal well-being and adjustment, strong interpersonal relations* with HCNs and *effectiveness in achieving work-related objectives* as effective descriptors of successful adjustment. Hammer (1986) and Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) suggest three additional types of ability that can contribute to successful cross-cultural adjustment: (a) *the ability to effectively communicate*; (b) *the ability to establish interpersonal relationships*; and, (c) *the ability to manage psychological stress*. Olebe and Koester (1989) associate eight more factors to intercultural effectiveness: (a) *interaction posture*; (b) *display of respect*; (c) *empathy*; (d) *interaction management*; (e) *tolerance for ambiguity*; (f) *relational roles*; (g) *task-related roles*; and, (h) *knowledge orientation*.

For Mendenhall and Oddou (1986) further suggest *strong relational capabilities, a creative ability to cope with environmental variables, and a supportive family situation* represent crucial characteristics as well. However, Kim (1988, 2001, 2005) sees *openness* and *resilience* as cardinal personality traits most likely to foster prompt adjustment. Expatriates displaying such qualities convey the positive energy associated with self-confidence and optimism, and are more likely to explore their new cultural setting.

Black and Stephens (1989) propose a 14-item adjustment-measuring model to assess adjustment to the host culture; some of the model's most important adjustment dimensions encompass: *living conditions, food, shopping, entertainment, healthcare, relationships with host nationals, job responsibilities, and personal performance*. The

cultural distance between an expatriate's home country and one of the country of assignment also plays a role in the effectiveness of cultural adjustment as greater cultural distance negatively affects one's ability to effectively interact and negotiate (Hofstede, 1980; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991).

McEnery and DesHarnais (1990) found that *functional expertise* to be the most important factor associated with the selection and preparation of expatriates. However, personal characteristics such as *flexibility, adaptability, tolerance of ambiguity, empathy, high self-esteem, interpersonal skills* and *knowledge of the host culture* are extremely important. McEnery and DesHarnais disagree with individuals who underestimate the importance of strong foreign language skills, and see such as skills as crucial to the successful cultural adjustment. Brislin (1993) actually views an expatriate's willingness to learn the language of the host country as having a more significant impact upon successful adjustment than actual fluency in the language itself. Moreover, *age, education, self-efficacy* and *past experience* have been associated with intercultural adjustment (Mamman, 1995; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991).

Hannigan's (1990) focuses upon intercultural effectiveness and sees *patience, flexibility, tolerance* and *respect for host culture* as beneficial attitudes, while *rigidity, ethnocentrism, dependence,* and *task-oriented behavior* prevent intercultural effectiveness. Cui and Awa (1992) distinguish between intercultural adjustment and effectiveness. For them, cross-cultural adjustment calls attention to personality traits, whereas overseas job performance calls for interpersonal skills. Yet, an expatriate's occupation or work function, marital status and family presence affect both adjustment and job performance. Harzing (1995) sees *open-mindedness, independence, curiosity,*

high tolerance for ambiguity, risk-taking, flexibility, patience, stability, and sensitivity to different values as cardinal virtues of the ideal expatriate.

Capitalizing upon the work of previous scholars (Black et al., 1991; Cui & Awa, 1992; Hannigan, 1990; Hawes & Kealey, 1998; Tung, 1981), Hullinger (1995) confirms through interviews with American expatriates in China that seven *endogenous* and *exogenous* factors had significant impact upon these informants. Sorting them in terms of relative importance, Hullinger reports the following factors: (a) *personality*; (b) *expectations of the China experience*; (c) *prior overseas experience*; (d) *motives, goals, and singleness of purpose*; (e) *language skills*; (f) *relationships with Chinese and other Americans*, and, (g) *preparation and training* (p. 109).

Hullinger (1995) characterizes endogenous factors as *internal* or as originating within an individual or as a function of that individual. He mentions *personality traits, motivation, knowledge* and *attitude* as examples of endogenous factors. Contrarily, factors such as *family influence, training* or *prior exposure* to foreign culture are considered exogenous or *external influencers* of the cultural adaptation process. Hullinger's work is significant from the view point that it confirms the findings of many scholars and contradicts others. Whereas some scholars (i.e., Black et al. 1991; Cui & Awa, 1992; Hannigan, 1990; Hawes & Kealey, 1981; Tung, 1981) highlight the importance of *personality* as an adjustment variable, Naumann (1992) sees exogenous factors as having a greater impact on cultural adjustment than endogenous ones. Hullinger challenges Naumann's contentions and argues that: "The antecedents of intercultural adjustment of Americans in China are primarily characteristics of the individual expatriate. Endogenous factors such as personality, expectations, motivation,

and knowledge determine almost completely the degree of intercultural adjustment and effectiveness” (p. 111). However, by focusing upon endogenous and exogenous factors, both Hullinger and Naumann overlook the influence that environmental factors (e.g., Chinese cultural antecedents) can have upon the adjustment of expatriates exposed to a given milieu; researching such factors is a primary purpose of this exploratory inquiry.

Importance and Benefits of Cross-Cultural Training (CCT)

The literature constantly emphasizes the importance of CCT in enhancing effective intercultural adjustment (Befus, 1988; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Brewster & Pickard, 1994; Eschbach, Parker, & Stoeberl, 2001; Marquardt & Engel, 1993; Mendenhall et al., 1987). Mendenhall et al. (1987) see CCT as a tool leading to the development of fruitful cross-cultural interactions. Ultimately, expatriates who receive CCT are more effective than individuals who do not. Effective CCT can also be a potent cultural shock reduction asset (Befus, 1988). Eschbach et al. (2001) found that CCT minimizes culture shock acuteness, reduces the time needed to gain job proficiency during the overseas assignment, and decreases the time needed to adjust to a new culture.

Further, in a review of 29 empirical studies Black and Mendenhall (1990) found a positive correlation between CCT, adjustment and performance, and a positive relationship between CCT and the development of appropriate perceptions toward host nationals. Marquardt and Engel (1993) contend that CCT provides MNCs with multiple advantages such as: (a) reduced turnover among overseas staff due to greater job satisfaction; (b) reduced waste of time and resources on fruitless ventures; (c) prevention of business losses due to cultural insensitivity; (d) increased ability to identify suitable business opportunities; and, (f) greater global competitiveness. In addition, Brewster and

Pickard (1994) found that both expatriate managers and their spouses value CCT as cross-cultural preparation enhances adjustment to foreign living and working conditions; particularly when living in isolated communities.

Ultimately, effective CCT enhances all forms of adjustment and minimizes the costs resulting from failed adjustment to foreign work and living conditions. It is hoped that study findings will further contribute to CCT literature.

Adjustment Benefits

Effective expatriate adjustment to a foreign milieu brings numerous benefits and beneficiaries. First, expatriate managers themselves benefit greatly from proper adjustment; if nothing else, well-adjusted expatriate managers are likely to be more satisfied, which significantly reduces the likelihood of premature resignation from an overseas assignment (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). This alone bears considerable weight in view of the substantial direct and indirect costs associated with expatriation. Selmer (2006a) contends "...well-adjusted business expatriates, attuned to the local socio-cultural environment, may be able to identify relevant knowledge and correctly assess its importance for various business decisions..." (p. 26). Ma (1999) sees the well-adjusted expatriate as first of all the "right kind of person." (p. 25).

Nevertheless, an ongoing challenge among scholars has been the inability to reach consensus about what skills and characteristics constitute the panoply of the *ideal* expatriation candidate. It simply appears that candidates who have the right combination of psychological traits, inter, intra-personal and professional skills, proper family support, and can most quickly adjust to new cultural surroundings to overcome culture shock can

get the job done. However, expatriates' characteristics only represent one aspect of the acculturation process; understanding the specific cultural factors that could test and challenge needed characteristics in a given culture is equally important. Zimmermann, Holman and Sparrow (2003) support such an assertion. They make three fundamental criticisms about the preponderance of quantitative expatriate adjustment inquiries, which they see as "problematic" (p. 46). First, the frequently used outcomes of adjustment may not appropriately reflect actual adjustment. For example, lack of suitable career alternatives may prompt some individuals to present themselves as fully adjusted, when in reality they are not. Moreover, most studies do not inquire about the specific coping mechanisms or strategies employed by expatriates to reach cross-cultural adjustment. Lastly, they point out that "... such studies do not explain how specific external conditions lead to adjustment" (p. 46). These observations too come in direct support of this study.

A Proven Model of Socio-cultural Adjustment

Multitude explanatory models have been proposed to encompass a broad array of adjustment-related variables into comprehensive theoretical systems (Berry, 1975, 1980, 1990; Berry & Annis, 1974; Berry & Kim, 1988; Berry & Sam, 1997; Parker & McEvoy, 1993). However, one empirically-supported model (i.e., Black et al., 1991) has long prevailed in the literature on socio-cultural adjustment. Capitalizing upon research conducted by Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) and Black and Stephens (1989), Black et al.'s (1991) compelling model of international adjustment links domestic or anticipatory adjustment to in-country adjustment. According to Black et al. (1991), the primary

function of anticipatory adjustment is to facilitate subsequent in-country adjustment. That aspect of adjustment primarily pertains to the dimensions associated with the expatriate and his or her organization. Contrarily, in-country adjustment pertains to modes (e.g., socialization tactics) and degrees of socio-cultural adjustment.

Of particular relevance is the fact that Black et al.'s (1991) model distinguishes between three degrees of socio-cultural adjustment: (a) *general*; (b) *interaction*; and (c) *work*. The model has been empirically tested and has found various levels of support in several studies (Black & Gregersen, 1991a; Black & Stephens, 1989; Gregersen & Black, 1990; Jung, K. H. Lee & Hwang, 2007; Naumann, 1992; Wang & Sangalang, 2005; Ward & Kennedy, 1996), including two meta-analytic reviews (Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer & Luk, 2005); it is thus preferred to the one proposed later on by Parker & McEvoy (1993), which categorizes variables into individual, organizational and contextual groups of determinants.

Potential Weaknesses of Acculturation Theory

Greenland and Brown (2005) report that a frequent criticism of Berry's Acculturation Theory comes from its limited integration with the broader contact literature. However, it is important to keep in mind the significant fragmentation of the literature on intercultural contact and communication. Some (Portela-Myers, 2006) reproach Berry's change of terminology when shifting the concept of *rejection* to *separation* and *deculturation* to *marginalization* (Berry 1980; Berry, Kim & Boski, 1987; Salant and Lauderdale 2003) also contend that Berry's theory may not fully reflect for the fundamental and complex nature of stress resulting from adaptive change. Portela-Myers

(2006) further regrets that although *identity* constitutes an important dimension of psychological acculturation, the theory does not place sufficient emphasis upon the phenomenon. Lastly, Portela-Myers deplores the fact that Acculturation Theory does not consider gender specificity in the acculturation process of sojourners.

Summary

The literature on acculturation and culture shock is expansive and much research as been conducted to inquire about the personal, psychological, organizational and contextual factors leading to the culture shock of expatriate managers and their families. However, more investigations and most particularly qualitative inquiries are needed to identify within the Chinese cultural environment specific factors leading to the culture shock of AEMs and prompting them to resign from Chinese postings at a greater pace than any other international assignment. Gaining knowledge of such antecedents could lead to CCT programs enhancement and stronger corporate support.

Chinese Culture – Overview, Dimensions and Complexities

Over the past five millennia, the many ethnic groups that gave birth to and still constitute the Chinese nation (i.e., *Han, Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Miao, Uyghur, Tujia, Yi, Mongol, Tibetan, Buyi, Dong, Yao, Koreans*, etc.) (CIA, 2011) have created a thriving, ingenious and enduring civilization. The four great inventions of ancient China (i.e., paper, gunpowder, compass and printing) tell a great deal about the inventiveness of Chinese people. Chinese farmers, craftsmen and scholars also introduced numerous

technological innovations in fields such as agriculture, ceramics, metallurgy, hydraulics, shipbuilding, mathematics, philosophy and astronomy. The only two human-made construction projects seen from space (i.e., Great Wall, Three Gorges Dam) were both built in China. Such accomplishments constitute a testimony to the creativity, courage, work capacity, patience and tenacity of the Chinese people (Buckley Ebrey, 1993, 1996; De Mente, 2009; Tao, 2008; Temple, 2007). Nevertheless, Western comprehension of Chinese culture in general and traditional Chinese values in particular, remains minimal.

Economic Context

“To be rich is to be glorious” – Deng Xiaoping

With an estimated 1,336,718,015 citizens, (CIA, 2011) the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has the largest population on Earth, and with a continued flow of unprecedented economic growth, China is now positioned to become the world’s largest economy in the 21st Century.

When the Chinese Communist Party took control of the country and founded in 1949 the People’s Republic of China, 89.4% of the population lived in rural areas and industry represented a mere 12.6% of the GDP (Lin, Cai, & Li, 2009). In spite of their intent, *the Great Leap Forward* and the *Cultural Revolution* did not reach their stated goals and exacerbated the deep poverty of rural China until the mid-1970s (Ravallion & Chen, 2007). Today, the agricultural sector of the economy only represents 9.6 percent of the Chinese GDP, while industry represents 46.8% and services 46.3% (CIA, 2011). The transition began in 1978, under Deng Xiaoping’s leadership, when the government realized the shortfalls of collectivized agriculture and began implementing market-centric

policies such as granting greater autonomy to state-controlled and private enterprises, opening foreign trade and investment and allowing progressive price liberalization, among many more reforms (CIA, 2011; Evans, 1993; Marti, 2002).

In 2010, China surpassed Japan, her main economic rival, to become the world's first exporting nation and second largest economy (Barboza, 2010) with an estimated GDP of \$10.09 trillion (CIA, 2011). China succeeded by opening her borders, actively seeking Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from MNCs and requiring joint-ventures and systematic partnering with Chinese firms. In 2010 FDI into China reached \$574.3 billion.

In spite of unprecedented economic growth, China still faces numerous hurdles such as sustaining economic growth, properly distributing the benefits resulting from economic prosperity, managing deep levels of economic disparity among rural and urban areas, reinforcing the social safety net that hundreds of millions of citizens came to expect and rely upon under Communist rule, and managing the substantial employment shifts resulting from a centrally-planned to a market-based economy (CIA, 2011). An estimated 200 million locally-registered peasants actually no longer reside in rural areas; they have left the countryside in hope to access urban economic prosperity (Chen, 2009; CIA, 2011). Addressing significant environmental issues, improving a lagging infrastructure, dealing with growing social tensions, fighting widespread corruption, managing the consequences of a rapidly aging population and dealing with long-term issues such soil erosion, water table declines and growing amounts of pollution represent other fundamental challenges for the Chinese Government (CIA, 2011; Kyngge, 2006). In addition, the government remains leery of the potential negative image consequences that growing pollution can have on national and international opinion.

Nonetheless, in spite of regional disparities, general living conditions throughout China have improved dramatically for much of the population and some levels of individual freedom have been granted (i.e., cell phones, limited Internet access); however, the CPC's political and economic control remains firm (CIA, 2011). Moreover, in spite of her huge population and potentially-substantial internal demand, China remains heavily dependent upon foreign trade. Chen (2009) reports that in 2008, total foreign trade represented US\$1.4 trillion or 63.3% of GDP. This heavy reliance upon foreign trade tends to indicate that the Western expatriation phenomenon shall not wane in the near future as expatriates' skills are closely intertwined with Chinese economic growth. This provides an important context for this inquiry.

Language

The uniqueness and complexity of China's seven major dialects and countless sub-dialects add another layer of difficulty to any attempt to discover or embrace the Chinese culture. Mandarin (Putonghua), the official language, is spoken by over 70% of the population. It is the language of government and is taught at schools throughout the country. Depending upon geographic location, the rest of the population either speaks one of the six other major Chinese dialects (e.g., Cantonese) or non-Chinese dialects such as Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur or Korean (CIA, 2011; De Mente, 2009).

Important Cultural, Philosophical and Religious and Contexts

Culture

Gallo (2008) affirms that considering China's significant geographic and ethnic diversity, generalizing about Chinese culture is almost an *exercise in futility*. Yet, in spite of huge social and cultural differences, with five millennia of recorded history, Chinese culture has been persistent, unique, intriguing and strong (Selmer, 2001a, 2001b).

Like most cultures, Chinese culture includes unique norms, values, beliefs, traits and characteristics. These dimensions have been strongly affected by the various philosophical, religious and cultural movements that evolved throughout Chinese history. Further, continued use of a written language over several dynasties has affected Chinese culture through high regard for and constant reference to traditional values (Selmer, 2001a, 2001b; Worm, 1997). Combined, all factors converge to foster the sense of balance, peace, harmony and strong national identity so dear to the Chinese people.

Religion & Philosophy

Although Communism, most particularly during the Cultural Revolution, made every single attempt to suppress religion, religion remains an important aspect of the life of many Chinese citizens. The U. S. Department of State (2011) refers to a 2007 study by East China Normal University which indicated that 31.4% of Chinese citizens over the age of 16 are religious believers. According to the same source, today five *patriotic religious associations* (i.e., Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism) are considered as state-sanctioned. The U.S. Department of State (2010) reports an estimated 20 million Muslims, 20 million Protestants, and 5.3 million Catholics in China, today. Yet, in spite of the relative tolerance granted to religion by the Chinese constitution, the Chinese Government remains suspicious of religion and keeps it under tight control (De Mente, 2009; Gallo, 2008). Moreover, the statistics pertaining to

religious beliefs do not consider the extreme importance that philosophical traditions such as Confucianism and Daoism bear over Chinese culture.

Confucianism.

As a school of thought, Confucianism has strongly influenced Chinese culture since Confucius' death in 479 B.C. E. Selmer (2001a) contends that "Confucianism has been a predominant ideology of China for thousands of years and it has still a fundamental influence on the Chinese mentality" (p. 7). According to Selmer, Confucianism has bestowed the Chinese people with both *stability* and *resilience*. Even though some debate whether Confucianism is a religion, philosophy or way of life, the influence of Confucianism over Chinese culture and society is somewhat identical to the role that religion plays in other cultural environments. Confucian thinking places strong emphasis upon spirituality and rituals (Gallo, 2008; C. Lee, 2003).

Confucianism fosters five cardinal virtues: *ren* (benevolence, humanism, charity), *yi* (honesty, duty and uprightness); *li* (morality, politeness, proper behavior,) and *chi* (wisdom in living a virtuous life), *xin* (faithfulness and integrity). Confucianism also promotes *zhi* (knowledge) and *jun zi* (kind, humble, tolerant, patient and patriotic harmony-building leadership) (Buckley Ebrey, 1993, 1996; Gallo, 2008; C. Lee, 2003). Gallo (2008) affirms that Confucianism deeply affected the Chinese collective mindset by promoting five sets of social roles still considered by Chinese people today. The five sets of relationships occur between Heaven and Earth, father and son, ruler and subject, older and young, and between husband and wife. *Harmony* among friends and society at large is highly valued. The philosophy further values *structure* among relationships, which calls for *respect* and *authority* (Selmer, 2001b). C. Lee (2003) posits: "Chinese

individuals live their lives totally bounded by multiple paired relationships, all within an ascending hierarchy of owed deference and obedience” (p. 52).

Bedford and Kwang (2003) highlight a fundamental distinction between Judeo-Christian and Confucian religious and philosophical perspectives. While Christianity sees all human beings as creatures of God, which makes them responsible for their own actions as they must ultimately answer to God, Confucianism sees individuals as a creation of family, itself resulting from the ancestors’ legacy. According to Bedford and Kwang (2003), in Chinese culture, the family constitutes a “great self” or “*da woo*” (p. 130) or *system of relationships* to which Chinese individuals are both *connected* and *indebted*. That great self must also be understood in terms of *extended family*.

The authoritative, and perhaps authoritarian, dimension of Confucianism is primarily due to its codification into strict disciplinary principles by generations of Confucian followers and philosophers who promoted *order, hierarchy, authority* and *obedience* to established ruling (Buckley Ebrey, 1993, 1996; De Mente, 2009; Selmer, 2001a, 2001b). Selmer contends that the primarily *autocratic style* of Chinese management is a consequence of Confucianism emphasis of *order, respect, obedience, discipline*, and a *regimented life*. Likewise, Plafker (2007) highlights the importance of *hierarchy* in Chinese culture and affirms that “failure to understand the hierarchy of Chinese groups you meet with can be disastrous...” (p. 92).

Björkman and Schaap (1994) remark that there are “...several advantages in selecting mature people for assignments in China. The Chinese traditionally value age and seniority for management positions, and may not respect young superiors” (p. 150). This can be problematic considering the fact that American culture values youth and that

expatriation candidates are usually selected in an early part of the career for their enthusiasm and energy, and while their children are fairly young. Fewsmith (2008) further highlights the multiple benefits that Confucian values such as *frugality, work ethic, probity, respect for family and education, and acceptance of authority* can have over economic development.

Today, Confucianism remains influential in modeling Chinese behavior, social relationships, moral thought and leadership characteristics, and is an important dimension of the Chinese persona (Buckley Ebrey, 1993, 1996; Gallo, 2008). Such dimensions may thus have an impact on the culture shock and adjustment of ABEs.

Daoism or Taoism.

Built upon the precepts of ancient masters like Chuang-tzu and Lao-tzu, *Dao* is translated as *the Way* and best conceived as a philosophy that fosters mysticism and the natural flow of things in the world (Gallo, 2008). Unlike Confucianism which prescribes authority, order and hierarchy, Daoism fosters *equilibrium* and following the *balanced path* resulting from the ongoing tension between opposite forces such *Yin* and *Yang*, or right and wrong, or light and darkness. Daoism thus fosters *wholistic thinking* and the *patient consideration* of all options and consequences as opposed to hurried linear reasoning. Such an approach contributes to some of the sharp cultural differences encountered by impatient, linear, logic-oriented Western expatriates impatient to achieve their goals (De Mente, 2009; Gallo, 2008; C. Lee, 2003).

The *metaphysical* and *mystical* nature of Daoism incites followers to think in terms of *humble leadership* and *holistic relationships* which is in sharp contrast to the rugged, confident and often antagonistic individualism fostered in the West (Gallo, 2008;

C. Lee, 2003). Hence, Taoist factors might perhaps be associated with the culture shock and adjustment of ABEs.

Buddhism.

According to the U.S. Department of State (2011), with an estimated 100 million adherents, Buddhism represents the largest religion in China. Like Daoism, Buddhism fosters *honesty, peace and compassion*. Attaining such virtues can be achieved through *mysticism, self-awareness, reflection and meditation* (Gallo, 2008; C. Lee, 2003). Crucial to Buddhism is the concept of *Wu* which can be translated as ‘deep insight’. Reaching such a deep insight or self-awareness allows Chinese leaders to better understand their surrounding world and take the right decisions (De Mente, 2009; Gallo, 2008). Hence, Buddhism-related factors such as the need for reflection might also have an influence over the culture shock and adjustment of ABEs.

Chinese Cultural Characteristics based upon Hofstede’s Framework

Hofstede’s (1980) four dimensions of culture (i.e., Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance) as well as the fifth one (i.e., long-term/short-term time orientation) added by Franke, Hofstede and Bond (1991) provide a practical framework for any attempt to understand Chinese culture. Kaye and Taylor (1997) used the framework to state that based upon the individualism-collectivism dimension, the Chinese culture can be described as *collectivist*. This implies that the notion of *group* and *harmony* within a given community are more important than individual concerns. According to Selmer (2000a):

Chinese collectivism is based upon the extended family, and out-group persons are not considered trustworthy. Characterized by a high degree of materialism and thrift, Chinese gain protection in a hostile and hierarchical society through the establishment of interdependent personal relationships, *guanxi*, based on exchange of services. These interpersonal relations are related to several social phenomena such as nepotism, corruption, cliques, use of middlemen, anti-social attitudes, networking, face consciousness and indirect patterns of communication. (p. 522)

This is quite significant considering the individualistic orientation of the American culture. Kaye and Taylor (1997) characterize Chinese culture as a high power distance one. This implies that *conformity* and *obedience to autocracy* prevail over independence and initiative, values so dear to Americans in particular. With regard to the low/high uncertainty dimension, Kaye and Taylor report that Chinese citizens tend to display low uncertainty avoidance and seem to tolerate ambiguity whereas Americans tend to favor organization. For Kaye and Taylor, three of Hofstede's cultural dimensions tend to highlight fairly sharp cultural contradictions between characteristics of the Chinese and American cultures. Contrarily, Kaye and Taylor did not observe significant contrasts between the Chinese and American cultures based upon the masculinity/femininity dimension. In terms of long-term/short-term time orientation, comparing the number of years that China and the United States of America have existed as political entities provides a good indication of national tendencies when it comes to time perception. For five millennia, Chinese citizens have valued time, patience and have had a long-term orientation. Throughout Asia, patience is viewed as a desirable quality;

most particularly in China where strong Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist traditions have sensitized the population to the virtues of reflection, self-awareness, harmony, tradition, serenity. Chinese youth learns very early how to respect the elderly and associate great age and wisdom. Contrarily, as a young nation, America values youth, speed, action, impatience, and independence. As globalization expands and more American organizations trade and negotiate with China, sharp differences in time orientation and other values contribute to cultural differences that must be reckoned with. Greater understanding of such differences is needed as they most probably affect the culture shock and adjustment of ABEs.

Other Unique Particularities of Chinese Culture

A second set of factors must be considered when reflecting upon the unique Chinese cultural characteristics affecting ABEs working in the PRC. These are pervasive but deeply entrenched Chinese cultural factors that require time and patience for any Westerner to fully grasp. All can affect expatriates in their personal life (i.e., relationship with Chinese landlords, neighbors and friends) as well as professionally through interaction with subordinates, co-workers, and business partners. Some of the most important factors to consider are: (a) *guanxi* (interpersonal connections or relations); (b) *mianzi* (face); (c) *xinyong* (personal trust); (d) *renqing* (favor exchange); (e) *zhong jian ren* (strong trust in a colleague or associate); (f) *zheng ti guan nian* (wholistic thinking) (Buckley Ebrey, 1993, 1996; C. Lee, 2003; De Mente, 2009; Gallo, 2008). Other crucial aspects of Chinese culture pertain to the notions of *nei jiu*, *zui e gan* and *fan zui* (guilt), and *diu lian*, *can kui*, *xiu kui* and *xiu chi* (shame).

Guan Xi or Guanxi or guanxi (Personal Relationships or Connections)

The literature on Chinese culture suggests that a critical but often misunderstood element of the Chinese culture is the notion of guanxi, which refers to personal relations or connections (Tsang, 1998). Fernandez and Underwood (2007) explain that in Mandarin, *guan* means “gate“ and *xi* means “links“ (p.22); guanxi can thus be understood as “...a gateway or connection between two people created by a link of mutual obligation to each other“ (p. 22). Tsang (1998) sees China as the land of guanxi and affirms that nothing can be accomplished in China without proper guanxi. Ju (1995) sees the construct as the most significant social and business asset of any given Chinese citizen.

Guanxi is family-centric and collectivist, and includes deep Confucian ethics which favor relationships with others as opposed to Christian values that conceive the individual as a function of one’s relationship with God (Hammond & Glenn, 2004; C. Lee, 2003; Luo, 1997; Su, Mitchell & Sirghy, 2007). Plafker (2007) explains that guanxi relations are actually ranked hierarchically with, at the very top, family connections, followed by friendships, connections related to city, town or village of origin, and classroom relationships established throughout one’s education. This bears particular significance for Western expatriates who cannot easily understand or penetrate closely knitted guanxi networks. Gallo (2008) affirms that guanxi implies reciprocity and long-term relationships as repayment for favors received. Gallo further explains:

People use their guanxi to receive special treatment, preferred terms in business, bending of rules, elimination of red tape, faster schedules and lower prices. . . In exchange, both parties might be willing to hire ‘under-qualified’ relatives or associates, pay special commissions’, offer special gifts at Chinese New year, and

other practices that some in the West might consider corrupt. In China most of this is considered good business under the auspices of *guan xi*. (p. 52)

Luo (1997) sees *guanxi* as one of the major cultural constituents of Chinese society and a key ingredient in the conduct of business. For Luo, *guanxi* cements relationships and dynamics among millions of Chinese individuals and businesses. Luo further asserts that no business person or organization can succeed in China without taking the time to establish proper *guanxi* connections. Gallo (2008) even argues that the term is one of the first words learned by Western expatriates sent to China.

Fernandez and Underwood (2007) refer to *guanxi* as “Chinese-style networking” (p. xxii) and affirm that it represents one of the most critical dimensions associated with the conduct of business in China. However, Björkman and Schaap (1994) warn that Western expatriates must deal with serious obstacles in developing needed *guanxi* connections. Plafker (2007) further warns that although *guanxi* and corruption are closely related, the two constructs are somewhat different as the *impetus* for imparted favors is very distinct, and *guanxi* lacks a material bribery dimension.

Buttery & Wong (1999) contend that other significant Chinese cultural traits such as *xinyong* (trust), *mianzi* (face) and *renqing* (favors) are closely associated to *guanxi* and require particular attention from expatriate managers willing to succeed in China. Expatriates must also balance the fine art of understanding and conforming to cultural expectations without succumbing to illegal or unethical temptations.

Mian Zi or Mianzi or mianzi (face)

The literature highlights the crucial significance of *Mianzi* or *face* in Chinese culture (De Mente, 2009; Gallo, 2008; C. Lee, 2003; Selmer, 2001a, 2001b). Face is an

integral component of an individual persona and must be maintained at all cost. Losing face implies shame and deep embarrassment. Plafker (2007) explains that in China “face has been codified into an elaborate and explicit social construct... the sum total of what is publicly visible about a person. In short, it is his or her reputation” (p. 95). Both C. Lee and Gallo report that Chinese business people spend significant time before commercial negotiations ensuring that none of the parties involved in a given transaction will lose face in the process. Björkman and Schaap (1994) report that Western expatriates often inadvertently harm work and business relationships through insufficient sensitivity to the Chinese notion of face.

Xin Yong or Xinyong or xinyong (personal trust)

Chinese culture scholars (i.e., Leung, Lai, Chan & Wong, 2005; Tong &Yong, 1998) define xinyong as *personal trust* and closely associate the construct to the *integrity, credibility, trustworthiness, or the reputation and character* of a given individual. Wong and Chan (1999) further contend that the *uncertainties* of the Chinese legal system give Chinese citizens no alternative but to rely upon xinyong (personal trust) and guanxi (personal relationship) to conduct transactions. Leung et al., (2005) see xinyong as equivalent to the American notion of *credit worthiness*. Whereas American citizens’ credit is measured by independent credit agencies the xinyong of Chinese citizens is measured by peers and partners based upon individuals’ ability to keep their word and meet commitments and obligations. Leung et al., sum up the concept by calling it the “measurement of a person’s business ethical integrity in China” (p. 532). They contend that xinyong encompasses a hierarchical dimension as people in higher circles of society tend to have greater xinyong; just like wealthy Americans tend to have greater credit

scores. Gallo (2008) explains that the concept of *trust*, which underlies the Western notion of *Win-Win* is not as prevalent in China as it is in the West as Chinese culture conceives trust as a family or friendship-related construct; trust progressively fades as it moves from the family core or inner circle to broader social circles.

Ren Qing or Renqing or renqing (Favor Exchange)

Traditionally, the term *renqing* refers to human *feelings* or *sensibilities*. However in a commercial context, the term takes a different meaning and refers to the established practice of requesting, granting or accepting favors. Björkman and Schaap (1994) report that numerous expatriates have expressed the view that Chinese individuals continually attempt to obtain favors. Although apparently insignificant in nature, such favors can commit recipients to reciprocity through *guanxi* (Gallo, 2008; C. Lee, 2003). Most particularly, acceptance or issuance of favors can put ABEs at risk under the terms of the Foreign Corrupt Practice Act (FCPA), which forbids American citizens from engaging in any form of gift exchanges or bribery overseas.

Zhong Jian Ren or zhong jian ren (Strong Trust in a Colleague or Associate)

Gallo (2008) contends that at times relying upon *Zhong Jian Ren* or *strong trust* built over time with a colleague or business associate can be an effective way for Chinese citizens to avoid embarrassment by being too direct, controversial or negative. This partially explains the importance of *middlemen* in Chinese commerce.

Zheng Ti Guan Nian or zheng ti guan nian (Wholistic Thinking)

Gallo (2008) emphasizes the sharp contrast between Western and Chinese approaches to thinking and reasoning. Whereas Western culture fosters linear, factual, logic-based, deductive thinking and direct communication, Chinese culture values *Zheng*

Ti Guan Nian or wholistic thinking and inductive reasoning. These contrasting philosophies play a role in the adjustment of Western expatriates who often get frustrated by the different logic, reasoning and communication of their Chinese business partners.

Nei jiu, Zui e gan, Fan zui gan or nei jiu, zui e gan, fan zui gan (guilt),

Bedford (2008) posits that although *guilt* and *shame* play important socialization and social control mechanisms in any society, different cultures assign different roles to such constructs. Bedford further contends that while the two emotions have been subject to scholarly research in the West, findings cannot apply to Chinese culture due to lack of specific research in that cultural environment. Nevertheless, Bedford distinguishes between three types of guilt found in Chinese society. While *nei jiu* refers to *failure to uphold an obligation to another*, *zui e gan* represents *moral transgression*, and *fan zui gan* must be understood in term of *transgression of law or rules*.

Diu Lian, Xiu Kiu, Xiu Chi or diu lian, can kui, xiu kui and xiu chi (shame).

Bedford (2008) makes similar distinctions for the notion of shame. While *diu lian*, which is closely related to *mianzi* (face) refers to *loss of face or reputation*, *xiu kiu* must be understood as *personal failure*, and *xiu chi* stands for *social failure*. Bedford emphasizes the importance to *diu lian* or loss of face in a culture where dignity, self-respect and the ability to meet social obligations are critical.

Guilt and Shame as they Pertain to Morality

Bedford and Kwang (2003) place great emphasis upon the different understandings and roles played by guilt and shame in Western and Chinese cultural traditions. While guilt constitutes an appropriate moral system platform in a culture (i.e.,

Western, American) valuing *individual responsibility*, shame represents a needed and more potent social control mechanism in a collectivist society valuing *group harmony*.

Bedford and Kwang (2003) further argue that in terms of *morality*, Western moral codes are primarily conceived in terms of *personal rights*, whereas a collectivist society like China's favors Confucian ethical constructs such as *personal duties* and *social goals*. Such distinctions are important as they emphasize the fact that constructs such as ethics and morality are essentially ethnocentric.

Conclusion – When in China...

Modern Chinese culture was built upon thousands of years of complex social and cultural interactions. The resulting norms, values, behaviors, expectations, reasoning patterns and communication styles are thus anchored in a deep historical context. The fact that China embraced economic reform 30 years ago, opened up her borders and increasingly trades with the world only represents a glimpse in the country's overall history. Expatriates working in China on behalf of their global employers must understand such facts. Ultimately, the burden of proof rests upon them; it is up to expatriate managers to genuinely attempt to understand the significance of the above-described cultural constructs and determine their potential personal, managerial and social implications. This requires time, commitment and patience; it also requires utmost honesty, genuine open-mindedness and deep humility. Regardless of living, working and business conditions, expatriates willing to effectively adapt to the Chinese cultural context should never forget about the importance of courtesy, politeness and a friendliness in a society that cherishes family, friendship, peace, balance and harmony.

Björkman and Schaap (1994) summarize quite effectively the adjustment challenges faced by American and Western expatriates working in China. They state:

There are numerous issues which many Western executives do not seem to understand well enough when they come to China. Among the most important ones are the significance of *face*; the importance of *guanxi*; the avoidance of personal responsibility taking on the part of the Chinese managers; the lack of interdepartmental communication; and the fact that decisions are made not through open discussion during formal meetings, but rather after extensive informal personal discussions during which consensus is sought (p. 151).

In addition, Björkman and Schaap put light upon the great *paradox* of expatriate life in China by explaining that after some time spent in China, many expatriates lose patience and stop fostering change, when time is precisely what is most needed to succeed in an environment that values patience and long-term relationships.

Summary of Important Expatriate Survey Findings

The literature on expatriation is rich and expansive. Over the years numerous conceptualizations and empirical studies have been undertaken (Birdseye & Hill, 1995; Black, 1988; Caligiuri & Phillips, 2003; Culpan & Culpan, 1993; Gregersen & Black, 1990; Kaye & Taylor; Li 1996; 1997; Tung, 1998a). The following section is divided into three sub-sections. The first section presents research findings associated with American expatriates in general. The second one introduces research findings related to Western (including American) expatriate managers working in China. The last section focuses

specifically upon findings resulting from investigations of American expatriates working in mainland China. The studies are presented chronologically within each sub-section.

General Studies Including American Expatriates

In a study of 67 American expatriates in Japan, Black (1988) looked at the several variables affecting work role transition. In sharp contrast with previous schools of thought that conceptualized adjustment as a *unitary* construct the research confirmed the *pluridimensional* nature of the phenomenon. The study uncovered that *role ambiguity* and *role discretion* do influence work adjustment, while pre-departure training, interaction with host nationals, and family adjustment correlate with general adjustment.

Culpan and Culpan (1993) compared the background, satisfaction, and work and cultural environment perceptions of 23 American managers and 87 European managers working in Turkey. The study found that whereas *job variety* stimulates European managers, American expatriates seek *greater autonomy* and *professional challenges*.

In a global survey of 115 American expatriates, working for three large U.S.-based MNCs, Birdseye and Hill (1995) investigated the individual, work-related and environmental variables influencing internal and external turnover influencers. Findings indicate that *job autonomy* and *material life satisfaction* are key predictors of turnover tendencies. However, job autonomy prevails over material life satisfaction with regards to the organizational/work-related dimension. In other words, American expatriates value their living standards and preservation of such standards on foreign assignments.

In a global survey of 409 primarily American expatriates, Tung (1998b) investigated multiple aspects of expatriation such as interaction with host nationals,

interaction-enhancing attributes, modes of acculturation, coping strategies, and potential relationship between expatriates' performance and specific country challenges. Results indicate that the country difficulty variable did not constitute an impediment to performance and success. Additionally, the majority of respondents saw expatriation as a beneficial career enhancer. Further, most respondents perceived *integration* and *assimilation* as potent performance contributors. Lastly, the survey highlighted the crucial role played by family support as a positive stress and anxiety coping mechanism. Another key contribution of Tung's study was the discovery of the continuous strain resulting from the need for expatriates to adapt to a host cultural environment and the inherent difficulties associated with that process.

In a global survey of 98 male and female American expatriates working for a US-based MNC, Caligiuri and Tung (1999) investigated potential differences between male and female business expatriates based upon three dimensions associated with expatriate assignment: (a) cross-cultural adjustment; (b) desire to terminate the assignment; and, (c) supervisor-rated performance. The study attached much importance to potential correlations between expatriate's (most particularly female ones) adjustment and work effectiveness and the cultural orientation and work values of assigned countries. The uncovered empirical evidence indicates that cultural work values did not influence female expatriates' ability to succeed in global assignments.

Through a mail survey of 343 Western business expatriates (including 97 North American managers) working in Hong Kong, Selmer (2000a) researched potential associations between expatriates' career goals and their intercultural adjustment. Surprisingly, the study discovered that the need to achieve career goals does not affect

the work dimension of socio-cultural adjustment. However, the need to meet career goals does positively affect the interaction with host nationals and general aspects of socio-cultural adjustment, as well as the psychological aspect of adjustment. Moreover, no other career-related variable (i.e., fit between assignment and career development prospects, beneficial or detrimental career decisions, and positive corporate support) had any meaningful association with socio-cultural or psychological forms of adjustment.

In a study pertaining to the adjustment of expatriate managers, Caligiuri (2000) found a significant negative relationship between the amount of contact with host-country nationals and expatriates' level of adjustment. According to Caligiuri, expatriates' personal characteristics might thus play a moderating effect in the aspect of adjustment. This phenomenon requires additional validation from additional empirical research.

Findings from a mail survey of 47 American repatriates by Eschbach et al. (2001) confirmed that CCT reduces the severity of culture shock and the time needed for one to become effective in an international assignment. Furthermore, the study found a strong correlation between skill development and productivity and effectiveness. It also showed a strong correlation between family's general adjustment and expatriate's adjustment. Such findings further support the value of CCT in ensuring expatriation success.

Selmer (2001c) investigated the career preferences of 314 American and European expatriate managers and found that executives with a predilection for expatriate assignments are predominantly older, have had previous experience with international assignments, tend to work for smaller firms and organizations with large populations of expatriates having the same nationality than their organization. Contrarily, gender,

marital status, role in the organization, organizational revenue, and size or amplitude of international operations did not affect survey respondents in terms of career preferences.

In a benchmark study Mohr and Klein (2004) investigated some of the factors influencing the adjustment of American expatriate spouses living in Germany. Findings confirm the importance of general living adjustment and interaction adjustment as dimensions of spousal adjustment as previously highlighted by Black and Gregersen (1991b, 1991c). In contrast to Black and Gregersen who found positive associations between the level of spouses' involvement in the decision-making process between the expatriate manager and the company, Mohr and Klein's (2004) empirical findings indicate positive but non-significant relationships between spouses' perceived levels of participation and adjustment dimensions. However, the qualitative component of the research identified *role adjustment* as a third critical dimension of spousal adjustment.

Studies of Expatriates Working in (Greater) China

Selmer (2006d) states that "from a Western perspective China is frequently regarded as the most foreign of all foreign places" (p. 40). Tung (1986) identifies seven areas of concern associated with the difficulties of Western expatriates in China: (a) *language difficulties*; (b) *lifestyle differences*; (c) *conflicting customs and behaviors*; (d) *poor infrastructure*; (e) *Chinese attitude toward life*; (f) *Chinese attitude toward foreigners*; and, (g) *food*.

Tung (1982) highlights the drawbacks resulting from the short-term orientation of American culture and short-range policies of American MNCs, which are ineffective compared to the longer time orientation of Japanese and European firms. This is

particularly significant within the long-term time orientation of the Chinese culture. Essentially, American executives are under pressure to perform while denied the time needed to understand or adapt to the Chinese culture. Björkman and Schaap (1994) discuss the phenomenon and report that to be effective expatriates need time to comprehend the Chinese cultural system. They bring forward specific issues such as the importance of face and guanxi, Chinese managers' avoidance of responsibilities, internal communication scarcity and avoidance of decision-making during formal meetings.

Though an empirical study Erbacher et al. (2006) investigate personal and situational factors associated with expatriate success in mainland China The study found that performance management, training, organizational support, willingness to relocate and strength of relationship between employee and employers were very significantly correlated to expatriate success. Erbacher et al. argue that expatriates conducting business in China face greater burdens such as understanding and interaction with local culture, language barriers, gaining local acceptance, training host nationals and meeting operational responsibilities. The study did, however, show some limitations such as the limited size of the sample surveyed and the fact that all informants were Australian expatriates. A similar survey of different nationals (i.e., Americans) could provide different results, thus creating a potential area of research.

Through a mix-method exploratory study of global expatriate managers working in the Hotel industry in Beijing, China, Kaye and Taylor (1997) assessed the occurrence of culture shock among European, Asian and American expatriates. Consistent with the work of previous scholars (i.e., Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Brislin, 1993; Harris & Moran, 1991), findings support the significance of CCT in enhancing intercultural

interaction and adjustment. Yet, the study found out that only 20% of the 89 participants had received pre or post-departure CCT, which confirms the literature's constant highlighting of corporate disregard for a process critically important to effective intercultural adjustment and expatriate success. With regards to the culture shock phenomenon, results support previous findings (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991) and suggest that the level, frequency and nature of personal interaction with host nationals directly relate to culture shock. More importantly, the study uncovered an inverse correlation between culture shock and intercultural sensitivity, which had not been previously described in the literature. This landmark study found correlations between culture shock and two managerial emphases; culture shock was shown to have a positive correlation with negotiation and a negative one with motivation. This calls for an adaptation of individual-centric management methods to group-oriented ones, which should prove more reflective of the collectivist nature of Chinese society.

Kaye and Taylor (1997) found that due to the greater expectations placed upon them, Asian expatriates were more susceptible to culture shock than non-Asians ones; hence, in spite of a potential linguistic impediments, Western and American expatriates could have a slight advantage in terms of work collaboration with Chinese citizens over their Asian counterparts.

Sergeant and Frenkel (1988) suggest that a major preoccupation of HR departments should be the design of effective performance management and reward systems. They further invite MNCs to take advantage of the cross-cultural knowledge individually gathered by expatriates through systematic mining of field-collected data.

In a qualitative case study, Osgathorp Smith (1993) interviewed ten informants to assess the learning needs of American expatriates getting ready for missions in Taiwan. Study findings highlight the critical importance of *trust* and *relationship-building* in conducting business in Taiwan. In turn, gaining trust requires a solid understanding of Taiwanese culture. Sharp cultural differences in communication patterns between American and Taiwanese cultures were identified as well, and such differences can trigger frustrations. Osgathorp Smith affirms that gaining a solid understanding of local business protocols and characteristics (i.e., market needs, legal matters, etc.) should be a key component of pre-departure training. Even though this study does not directly pertain to the PRC, the fact that it is a qualitative study concerned with ABEs preparing for assignments in Taiwan, which is a part of greater China, is relevant to the intended study.

Björkman and Schaap (1994) combine the findings of two separate qualitative inquiries (Björkman, 1994; Schaap, 1992) to report some of the fundamental acculturative issues faced by expatriate managers working in China on behalf of Sino-Western joint-ventures. The rich, contextual findings resulting from the qualitative approach put light upon the high level of frustration experienced by Western business expatriates working in China. Björkman and Schaap state: “. . . despite many success stories, most expatriate foreign managers experience frustration” (p. 147). The root causes of such frustrations are multiple and consistent with the ones identified through the literature; they encompass inappropriate pre- and post-departure training, language and communication difficulties, intercultural challenges (e.g., dealing with face and *guanxi*), work-related problems, spouse- and family-related issues (i.e., inability for spouses to work in China), seclusion from families staying at home, lack of social life, air

pollution, and lack of corporate understanding and support. This qualitative inquiry proves that seeking depth of understanding by patiently listening to the stories (Cherrier, 2005; Haigh & Crowther, 2005) of a small group of informants can lead to the discovery of rich and contextually meaningful scholarly data. The study thus represents an excellent model for this exploratory study.

Selmer (1999a) indicates that expatriates' need to achieve career goals does not affect the work dimension of socio-cultural adjustment. However, the need to meet career goals does positively affect the general and interactive degrees of socio-cultural adjustment, as well as the psychological aspect of the phenomenon. Moreover, no other career-related variable (e.g., fit between assignment and career development prospects) had any meaningful association with socio-cultural or psychological forms of adjustment.

After investigating the psychological and socio-cultural adjustment as well as the coping strategies of 150 Western expatriates (including 57 AEMs) working in the PRC, Selmer (1999b) suggests that expatriates should actively seek interaction with host nationals to minimize surprises and frustrations resulting from cultural differences. Selmer also encourages the use of pre- and post-arrival CCT to help expatriates and their dependents cope with the stress resulting from cultural differences. Selmer further invites MNCs to improve their selection practices and encourages expatriates to learn Mandarin.

In a survey of 154 Western expatriates assigned to China, Selmer (1999b) tested the U-Curve Theory by investigating the socio-cultural and psychological adjustment of study participants. The survey confirmed appearance of a U-Curve in the general, work and interactive degrees of adjustment. However, such a curve did not appear with regards

to psychological status. The research is consistent with published literature and highlights the importance of pre and post-arrival CCT in minimizing culture shock.

Selmer (2000c) reports European expatriates working in China showed lower rates of psychological adjustment than their American counterparts. For Selmer, the results contradict stereotypes about the *ugly American* expatriate "...who bulldozes his or her way through another country - speaking only English..." (p. 16)

Selmer (2001a) shows that ABEs working in China were more socio-culturally adjusted than their Western European colleagues. Selmer posits that variations in levels of adjustment, and most particularly socio-cultural adjustment, need not necessarily be distinguished in terms of nationality but rather in terms of amount of CCT received as

Zimmermann et al. (2003) highlight the paucity of qualitative research associated with the adjustment of business expatriates in China. In an innovative qualitative study using a semi-structured instrument, they researched the adjustment mechanisms of 18 German business expatriates working in the RRC. Findings suggest that informants adjusted interculturally by progressively accepting Chinese socio-cultural norms. However, they had rather enforce their own work habits, while mixing established and new living norms and patterns. Of extreme importance to this proposed study is the fact that Zimmermann et al. found that the "human part of the foreign environment" (p. 63) greatly affects the intercultural circumstances faced by expatriates, and consequently, their adjustment. They report: "... it is fundamentally limiting to focus only on the expatriate's adjustment and neglect its interactive nature. To achieve a better understanding of such mutual adjustment processes, more in-depth studies of the phenomenon are needed" (p. 63). In other words, more investigations are needed to

comprehend how Chinese socio-cultural antecedents may affect the three empirically-tested degrees of adjustment (Black et al., 1991). Such findings support the proposed investigation of Chinese cultural factors affecting the adjustment of ABEs in China.

Selmer (2004) reports that both perceived inability and unwillingness to adjust among new Westerns and American expatriate managers tend to influence their socio-cultural adjustment but not their psychological adjustment. However, such factors tend to either disappear or prove of reduced significance overtime.

Liu and Schaffer (2005) show that social capital variables are strong predictors of expatriate performance but are moderately related to adjustment. Results put light upon significant relationships between expatriates' effectiveness and their ability to seek and develop strong relationships with host nationals, which has strong CCT implications.

Selmer (2005b) investigates potential correlations between the size of Chinese cities where expatriates are posted and their adjustment to work and local life. Findings indicate that the size of a given assignment location shows a positive association with work and general adjustment. However, no association between the size of the location and interactive adjustment was found, possibly due to the fact that language difficulties can affect cross-cultural communication regardless of urban environment size.

Selmer (2006c) inquired about the potential impact that linguistic abilities and Mandarin fluency may have on the socio-cultural adjustment of Western expatriates working in the PRC. Findings indicate that linguistic abilities have a positive association with socio-cultural adjustment. The positive relationship was strongest between language ability and the interactive degree of socio-cultural adjustment; contrarily, the association was weakest for work adjustment. Selmer (2006c) thus highlights the crucial importance

of learning basic Mandarin before accepting a posting in China, as use of rudimentary language skills will convey a propensity to discover and embrace Chinese culture. Doing so will greatly facilitate socio-cultural adjustment.

Through a qualitative study using semi-structured instruments, Goodall et al. (2006/2007) uncovered the importance that Chinese employees and their culture attach to relationships; individualistic Western managerial practices cannot be simply transposed to the Chinese environment.

Through 20 in-depth interviews with senior executives managing European (n=12), American (n=7), and Japanese (n=1) MNC's, Fernandez and Underwood (2007) inquired about the specific challenges encountered by MNC's and expatriate employees conducting business in mainland China. They narrow the critical success qualities needed by expatriates working in China to three sets of attributes including nine essential components. First, expatriates working in China must possess undeniable *professional qualities* such as technical and corporate expertise, as well as proven international experience. Second, expatriates must have *personal global qualities* like a multicultural mindset and solid commitment to learn. Lastly, expatriate managers must display *personal China-specific qualities* such as humility, strength, patience, speed and Guanxi-building abilities. This study too provides a good model for this proposed inquiry.

Studies of American Expatriates in China

Considering the importance of China to global commerce, over the past twenty years, the literature on expatriation associated with the Chinese mainland has been rapidly growing (Davidson, 1987; Erbacher et al., 2006a; Fernandez & Underwood,

2007; Goodall et al., 2006/2007; Hullinger, 1995; Selmer, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c; Selmer, 2000a; 2000b, 2000c; Selmer, 2001a; Selmer, 2001b, 2001c; Selmer, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; Selmer, 2003; Selmer, 2004; Selmer, 2005a, 2005b; Selmer, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). Most studies, and most particularly empirical investigations, highlight the sharp cross-cultural differences that both Western and American expatriates have to contend with in their adaptive efforts. Nevertheless, there exists a strange scarcity of research on the intercultural adjustment of American expatriate managers in China. The few studies vaguely resembling our proposed inquiry are the ones conducted by Kaye and Taylor (1997) who investigated the culture shock phenomenon among hotel employees in Beijing; Hullinger's (1995) study of the intercultural adjustment antecedents of American expatriates in China; Davidson's (1987) and Björkman and Schaap's (1994) investigations of acculturative issues affecting managerial dynamics in Sino-American joint-ventures; Goodall et al.'s (2006/2007) research on the adjustment of expatriate managers working in China; Fernandez and Underwood (2007) who interviewed 20 senior executives managing MNC's in China. However, of these six studies, only two (Davidson's and Hullinger's) limited themselves to ABE informants.

Through in-depth interviews with 47 American business entities operating joint ventures in the PRC, Davidson (1987) researched some of the cross-cultural factors affecting the dynamics leading to the creation and management of Sino-American joint ventures. Findings bring forward the length of time needed to conduct effective negotiations between Western and Chinese firms due to the prevalent role played by the Chinese government in the process. Whereas Western organizations send senior executives and decision-makers early on in the negotiation process, Chinese firms do not.

Rather they send a plethora of low-level managers to seek as much information as possible about contemplated partners. Negotiations thus require both time and patience. Davidson (1987) emphasizes the value of a having long-term orientation when doing business in China. In addition, the study highlights the vital importance of translators in managing mutual shortfalls in language mastery. Findings further indicate that Chinese employees are eager to learn, can learn quickly, can be extremely productive, and respond well to incentives. However, providing proper training is critical.

Through in-depth face-to-face interviews with 40 informants from business, educational and U.S. Embassy circles, Hullinger (1995) conducted a qualitative inquiry exploring some of the factors affecting the adjustment, and ultimately success or failure, of American expatriates in China. Emphasis was placed upon the endogenous and exogenous factors affecting the propensity of expatriates to adjust to the host environment. Study findings reinforce the importance of endogenous factors such as *personality* and *motivation* in adaptation potential. Having deep psychological roots, these factors cannot be easily affected by CCT; MNCs should therefore pay strong attention to expatriate candidate selection. Contrarily, exogenous factors such a prior international experience and amount of CCT received can be affected by both individuals and their employers. Family support represents another important adjustment factor, which is exogenous to the expatriate but endogenous to family members.

In addition, Hullinger (1995) contends that “The semi-structured interview is an effective means of studying the expatriate experience. Additional qualitative research is recommended as well as studies addressing the role of personality, motivation, the expatriate family in adjustment, and the universality of antecedents of adjustment” (p.

132). Hullinger's approach is quite compelling and had a strong influence over the design of this proposed investigation.

This shortage of scholarly research attempting to identify within the Chinese cultural environment, specific factors leading to the culture shock of American business expatriates and having a negative impact on their socio-cultural adjustment provides the primary impetus for proposed inquiry.

Summary

Expatriation and acculturation are complex phenomena that have been investigated from multiple disciplinary and scholarly perspectives. The literature on expatriation and cross-cultural communication places much emphasis upon the notions of intercultural adaptation and adjustment of individuals working overseas. Of particular significance is the notion of culture shock, a construct encompassing a multitude of psychological, behavioral and socio-cultural antecedents affecting the intercultural adjustment of expatriates and their dependents. While some individuals effectively cope with cross-cultural challenges and successfully overcome cultural shock antecedents; many do not. In turn, failure to successfully adjust to professionally-assigned foreign working conditions bears numerous cost implications and negative consequences for expatriates, their dependents, and their employers. However, fruitful overcoming of culture shock and adjustment challenges can lead to personal, professional, socio-cultural and organizational growth.

Over the years, a broad array of theoretical perspectives, frameworks and models have been proposed to elucidate the above-cited phenomena. Combined, four prominent theories provide the theoretical framework needed to conduct this exploratory investigation. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory properly links Chinese and American cultures and brings forward dimensions underlying some of the cross-cultural differences being explored in this investigation.

Culture Shock Theory offers a needed theoretical perspective to comprehend the multitude of stress, uncertainty and anxiety-creating factors testing expatriates' ability to effectively adjust to a foreign cultural milieu.

While controversial among scholars, U-Curve Theory has been a compelling and enduring research framework that describes shifts in and phases of psychological adjustment in individuals exposed to a foreign culture. Although often criticised for a shortage of empirical and longitudinal evidence, the U-Curve model continues to be widely used in scholarly research and is closely intertwined with studies associated with culture shock and cultural adjustment (Berardo, 2006; La Brack & Bernardo, 2007).

Acculturation Theory brings clarity in a disconnected field of scholarly research and connects essential study constructs such as acculturation, adaptation and adjustment.

Lastly, Black et al.'s (1991) comprehensive and empirically-supported model of international adjustment provides a valuable research framework for this intended exploratory study by focusing the research on three key degrees of socio-cultural adjustment; namely: general, work and interactive degrees of adjustment. Furthermore, by conceiving cross-cultural adjustment as a multidimensional phenomenon, this all-

encompassing model effectively integrates known and field-tested adjustment antecedents and guides the researcher in his inquiry.

This literature review has shown that while 50 years of scholarly research in the fields of expatriation, psychology, sociology, management and cross-cultural communication have identified a broad array of endogenous and exogenous associated with the culture shock, maladjustment and failure of expatriates managers, very little is known about specific Chinese cultural antecedents leading to high failure rates among American business expatriates assigned to the PRC. Uncovering some of these factors is the primary purpose of this investigation.

Chapter III introduces the research methodologies associated with the inquiry.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Chapter Overview

The literature on expatriation indicates that a significant number of American expatriates resign prematurely from their overseas assignments. A primary cause of failed expatriation is the failure to adjust to new cultural contexts, a phenomenon known as culture shock. The literature further indicates that China, considered to be a hardship country, represents both the greatest expatriation need for MNCs and the most challenging cultural environment for expatriates to adjust to. Although numerous studies have investigated the intercultural adjustment of expatriate managers, very few studies have actually explored the culture shock or intercultural adjustment challenges of American expatriates in the Chinese cultural context. No study has specifically attempted to identify Chinese cultural factors negatively affecting ABEs in their general, work and interactive degrees of adjustment. This exploratory study is designed to fill this gap.

Research Design

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of scientific inquiry were originally entertained in creating this study. For example, the use of a Web-based survey instrument to approach a large sample of American expatriates and gather statistically-relevant and potentially generalizable findings was considered. Approaching a small panel of cross-cultural experts through a Delphi Technique instrument was contemplated as well. The inherent strengths and weaknesses of such research methodologies were then compared. Ultimately, the following factors supported the use of an exploratory qualitative inquiry. First, survey instruments, particularly mailed ones, are quite prevalent among expatriate studies while qualitative inquiries seeking rich, thick, and descriptive data through first hand accounts from expatriate informants are scarce. The use of the term ‘informant’ is purposeful as this exploratory study primary seeks new information from ABEs about the factors that lead to their culture shock and negatively affect their adjustment.

Second, Hullinger (1995) points out that a significant drawback of traditional questionnaire-based expatriate surveys is that both subjects and antecedents “are essentially one dimensional” (p. 32). In quantitative inquiries, participants usually respond to scale-related questions leading to statistical analyses seeking generalizability. However, the search for generalizability comes at the expense of *meaning*. Contrarily, by trading *quantity* of data for *quality* of data, qualitative researchers seek to gain a deep understanding (Patton, 1985, 1990) about world views and socially-constructed meaning (Merriam, 1988, 1992) as opposed to simply seeking cause/effect relationships between variables (Lauer & Asher, 1988).

Third, naturalistic inquiries are ideally suited to meet three fundamental research purposes: to explore, explain or describe a phenomenon under investigation (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). While explanatory and descriptive studies elucidate phenomena or depict relationships between events and related meaning, exploratory inquiries seek “...rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are unexplored in the literature” (p. 33). The circumstances and factors affecting the culture shock and cross-cultural adjustment of ABEs in the Chinese cultural environment were viewed as complex enough to justify an exploratory study. By being allowed to tell their stories (Cherrier, 2005; Haigh & Crowther, 2005) and properly describe their experiences, qualitative informants can provide researchers with rich, meaningful and contextually-relevant data. Exploratory studies are particularly suited to collect such oral reports.

Fourth, Merriam (1988) contends that in addition to be ideally suited for exploratory studies, qualitative research can further *elucidate* and *augment* findings resulting from preceding quantitative inquiries by bringing substance to focus areas. This is an important aspect of this study as literature findings obtained from a multitude of quantitative studies support the theoretical perspectives (i.e., Culture Shock Theory, U-Curve Theory) associated with the research. For example, the multiple dimensions of Black et al.’s (1991) framework of international adjustment were empirically-tested through numerous quantitative studies. This qualitative study can thus capitalize upon a quantitatively-tested model to explore specific factors associated with the model’s proposed degrees of adjustment. Reciprocally, findings resulting from this qualitative investigation could prepare the ground for additional quantitative inquiries.

Patton posits: “The quantitative data identify areas of focus; the qualitative data give substance to those areas of focus.... Qualitative data can put flesh on the bones of quantitative results, bringing the results to life. . .” (1990, p. 131). Moreover, unlike quantitative disciplines that value *deductive thinking* qualitative inquiries rely primarily upon *inductive* research methodologies. As a result, “qualitative researchers build toward theory from observations and intuitive understandings gained in the field” (Merriam, 1988). For Merriam, the design of a qualitative study ought to be “. . . emergent and flexible, responsive to conditions of the study in progress” (p. 8).

In view of the above factors, use of an exploratory study was considered most effective to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese cultural factors contributing to the culture shock of ABEs and having a negative effect on their cross-cultural adjustment.

Interviewing

Marshall and Rossman (1999) affirm that qualitative inquiries focusing upon *individuals* are best served by an *in-depth interview* research strategy. Seidman (2006) justifies the value of interviewing by affirming that at the core of the technique lays a genuine interest in the lives and stories of others because their richness is worthy of consideration. This is consistent with the purpose of this exploratory study which aims at listening to the intercultural stories of American expatriate managers living and working in China. Compared to surveying, interviewing provides the researcher with an ability to listen, observe non-verbal dimensions, seek swift elucidation of comments, and adapt to a given interviewing context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). Zimmermann et al.

(2003) highlight the merits resulting from the use of interviewing in conducting exploratory research; they contend that interviews secure direct adjustment-related data from expatriates as opposed to having to statistically treat personal and situational variables in hope to uncover necessary relationships.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed (see Appendix B) to prepare questions relevant to the inquiry, and e-mailed to informants before each interview. Osgathorp Smith (1993) found out that providing informants with an interview outline before interviews is beneficial as it helps reduce potential participant apprehension and strengthens the interview process by mentally preparing study participants for the interview. Study participants confirmed such benefits and several participants expressed that they had reflected upon proposed interview questions before the interview.

Further, to ensure that new data would emerge from the exploratory investigation, no pre-identified data about known culture shock or adjustment antecedents were provided to participants ahead of the interview. Moreover, consistent with the naturalistic approach, interviews were not confined to the boundaries of the interview guide and probing questions were asked as valuable data emerges. This provided the inherent flexibility associated with exploratory interviews (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Informant Selection

Population

The targeted population for this study was composed of American business expatriate managers currently working in the People's Republic of China.

Sampling

Unlike quantitative research which aims at generalizability, qualitative research seeks meaning and depth of understanding; thus, use of a probabilistic sampling is not necessary (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990). Patton (1990) explains that *purposeful sampling* is the most common qualitative research sampling strategy, and proposes 16 kinds of purposeful sampling. One of them, *convenience sampling*, allows informant selection based upon convenience to the researcher. This sampling strategy was retained as the method is cost-effective, easy to carry out and saves research time compared to probabilistic sampling techniques. Further, convenience sampling allows researchers to target groups of individuals (e.g., ABEs) who display characteristics pertaining to the phenomena under investigation (i.e., expatriate work in the PRC, culture shock, socio-cultural adjustment). However, this researcher understands that use of a convenience sample carries bias risks which might affect credibility, and comes at the expense of generalizability (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990).

Selection Criteria

Panel uniformity, consistency of purpose and convenience of access were key determinants in defining the sample selection framework. Within that framework, sample selection considered the following criteria:

Nationality: Only American expatriates were sought for this study. However, one of the 14 participants declared a dual American/Canadian citizenship.

Employment: Only American business expatriates currently working in the PRC were sought for this study.

Industry: No restrictions were imposed in terms of industry experience. Several participants had worked for multiple industries or consult across industries.

Time in country: Culture shock affects all expatriates from initial exposure to a new culture to full acculturation. Hence, no limitations were imposed in terms of time spent in China. On average, the 14 informants had worked in China for 10 years. The informant with the shortest tenure had been in China for four months. The one with the longest tenure has lived in China for 17 years.

Residence: Informants were located in four Chinese cities: Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Suzhou.

Accessibility: Participants meeting the criteria were entered in a database built through: (a) the researcher's personal (one of the informants is a friend of the researcher) and professional contacts (b) referrals from personal and professional contacts in China; (c) referrals from interviewees as the investigation evolved; (d) contacts with the American Chamber of Commerce in China; and, (e) referrals from U.S. Embassy personnel. A total of 35 expatriates were referred to the researcher as potential study participants. Out of the 35, six were discarded at the outset for not meeting study requirements, and 29 participants were contacted via e-mail to participate in the study. Out of the 29 expatriates invited to participate in the study, three were female expatriates and 26 were male expatriates. Out of the 14 informants who participated in the study, 13 were male expatriates and one was a female expatriate. Participants came from a broad variety of industries, companies and management functions.

Table 3

Profile of Study Participants

	National Origin	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Spouse National Origin	Years in China	City	Level of Mandarin Proficiency	Company Activity / Industry	Company Profile
1	USA	M	34	MD4	USA	.3*	SU	Beginner	MFRG	PUBLAM
2	US/CAN	M	56	DV1	-	13	GU	Conversant	EDCG	EDUCHI
3	USA	M	55	DV1	-	14	SH	Fluent	CLTG	PRIVAM
4	USA	M	42	SGL	-	17	SH	Fluent	RETL	PUBLAM
5	USA	M	58	DV1	-	16	SU	Conversant	CLTG	PRIVAM
6	USA	M	35	SGL	-	12	SH	Fluent	CLTG	PRIVAM
7	USA	M	40	MD4	Japan	9	SU	Fluent	PUBL	PRIVAM
8	USA	M	58	MD2	China	15	SH	Conversant	CLTG	PRIVAM
9	USA	M	52	DV1	-	14	SH	Fluent	MFRG	PUBLAM
10	USA	M	38	MD4	USA	5	BE	Conversant	LAWF	PRIVAM
11	USA	M	24	SGL	-	2.5	BE	Proficient	IASR	AMNGO
12	USA	M	44	MD3	China	14	SH	Conversant	MFRG	PUBLEU
13	USA	M	33	MDA	China	8	BE	Fluent	ASTR	STAREP
14	USA	F	33	DV2	-	2	SH	Beginner	MFRG	PUBLEU

* .3 of a year = 4 months

National Origin: USA = American, US/Can = Dual nationality: American /Canadian

Respondent's sex: M = Male, F = Female

Chinese city location: BE = Beijing, GU = Guangzhou, SH = Shanghai, SU = Suzhou

Marital status:

SGL= Single,

MD1 = Married, no children, wife lives in the USA,

MD2 = Married, no children, wife lives with expatriate in China

MD3 = Married, with children, family lives in the USA

MD4 = Married, with children, and family lives with expatriate in China

DV1 = Divorced

DV2 = Divorced / single parent with children living in China

Company Activity / Industry:

ASTR = American State Trade Representative

CLTG = Consulting,

CRAD = Creative/Advertising,

EDCG = Education/Consulting,

EDUC = Education,

IASR = Industry Associations Representative,

LAWF = Western Law Firm,

MFRG = Manufacturing,

MKTG = Marketing,

OPRS = Operations/Logistics,

PROP = Property Investment,
 PUBL = Publishing,
 RETL = Retail

Company profile:

AMNGO = Industry Representation, Research, Publishing & Advocacy.
 EDUCAM = American Educational Institution,
 EDUCHI = Chinese Educational Institution,
 PRIVAM = American Private Business,
 PRIVCH = Chinese Private Business,
 PRIVEU = European Private Business
 PUBLAM = American Public business,
 PUBCHI = Chinese Public Business,
 PUBLEU = European Public Business
 STAREP = American State Trade Representation

Data Collection and Instrument Description

Data was collected from participants through semi-structured phone interviews (Merriam, 1988) using Skype technology. An interview guide was used to lead informants and ensure that data were collected from respondents on a consistent manner while providing latitude for free articulation of ideas (Borg & Gall, 1989; Patton, 1985, 1990). Semi-structured interviews provided consistency of purpose while leaving room for free expression of participants; they also streamlined the interview process and the subsequent data analysis compared to open-ended interviews (Merriam, 1988).

An initial 17-question, semi-structured general interview guide focusing upon the personal experience of expatriate managers was developed (see Appendix C) and tested through a brief pilot study. Upon review of pilot study findings, the guide was revised (see Appendix B). The instrument was structured around two broad categories of questions: (1) discovery of factors associated with culture shock and intercultural adjustment; and, (2) personal characteristics of participants (i.e., age, marital status, etc.).

The first part of the questionnaire was designed in consideration of Black et al.'s (1991) model of international adjustment.

Both the data collection and analysis processes relied upon computer-mediated communication (CMC) protocols as they simplify data collection and data analysis processes, reduce research expenses and enhance response rates (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Participants were identified and approached through e-mail and Skype technologies. Interview guides and informed consent documents (see Appendix A) were then e-mailed to participants via e-mail. Once signed, informed consent documents were returned, and interview appointments were made electronically via e-mail.

Table 4

Study Averages

Respondent Code	Expatriate Nationality	Sex	Location	Age	Years in China	Interview Length (minutes)
I1-M-SU-MGT	USA	M	Suzhou	34	.5	49
I2-M-GU-EDC	US/CAN	M	Guangzhou	56	13	68
I3-M-SH-CLG	USA	M	Shanghai	55	14	32
I4-M-SH-MGT	USA	M	Shanghai	42	17	0 *
I5-M-SU-CLG	USA	M	Suzhou	58	16	50
I6-M-SH-CLG	USA	M	Shanghai	35	12	35
I7-M-SU-MGT	USA	M	Suzhou	40	9	110
I8-M-SH-CLG	USA	M	Shanghai	58	15	50
I19-M-SH-MGT	USA	M	Shanghai	52	14	67
I10-M-BE-LAW	USA	M	Beijing	38	5	39
I11-M-BE-IAR	USA	M	Beijing	24	2.5	27
I12-M-SH-LAW	USA	M	Shanghai	44	14	51
I13-M-BE-STR	USA	M	Beijing	33	8	36
I14-F-SH-LAW	USA	F	Shanghai	33	2	48
				----- 43 Years	----- 10 Years	----- 51 minutes

Average age of the 14 study participants: 43 years

Average numbers of years spent working as an expatriate in China by the 14 study participants: 10 years

0* = Respondent I4-M-SH-MGT chose to participate in the interview by e-mailing his responses to study questions.

Total interview time associated with the 13 survey phone interviews: 662 minutes

Average duration of the 13 survey phone interviews: 51 minutes

Interviews were then conducted over the phone through Skype technology over a period of six months. Interviews were recorded through computer-recording technology as well. Audio files resulting from each interview were then uploaded electronically to the secured Website of an approved transcription services provider (GMR Transcription Services, 2011). Electronic transcripts were then downloaded to a secured computer and uploaded to a text analysis software application (MAXQDA10, 2011) for subsequent data analysis. 13 of the 14 interviews occurred over the VoIP phone protocol (Skype, 2011). However, one of the expatriates chose to participate in the survey via e-mail. The 13 phone interviews lasted an average of 51 minutes.

The Researcher

A fundamental paradigm of qualitative research is the conviction that the researcher represents the true data gathering instrument (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990; Seidman, 2006). For these scholars, the researcher should thus exhibit an aptitude to effectively design and implement needed research. However, Patton (1990) warns that “the human factor is the great strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis” (p.372). Marshall and Rossman (1999), in particular, stress the importance of competence, itself a function of the scope and purpose of the research process.

Several factors contribute to this researcher's competence and ability to implement the proposed research. First, the researcher has lived as an expatriate to the United States for twenty-five years. He thus has a keen understanding of all processes associated with cross-cultural adaptation. In particular, the researcher has gone through all phases of the UCT model and is now fully bi-cultural (French/American). In addition, the researcher has practiced and taught international business for more than fifteen years. In recent years, the researcher also made two trips to China and interacted with numerous American business expatriates there. Lastly, for the past five years, the researcher has focused much of his attention to the topic being researched.

Confidentiality and Other Ethical Considerations

Ethics

Consistent with scholarly research ethical standards, ethical behavior, confidentiality and protection of participants were key concerns of this researcher. Such concerns were mandated by three key drivers: (a) the researcher's character, conscience and strong belief in the value of sound scientific research principles; (b) the researcher's strong belief in the ethical responsibilities of a Christian researcher; and, (c) the researcher's desire to respect the ethical principles and standards publicized by both George Fox University and the American Psychological Association (APA, 1992).

According to Kluge (2006), the three main responsibilities of a Christian researcher are: (a) autonomy; (b) beneficence; and, (c) justice. Autonomy means that the researcher trusts that informants are willing and able to make informed decisions about

their participation. Beneficence implies that the researcher has a moral and ethical obligation to maximize research benefits for participants and society. Justice calls for participants to be treated ethically and equitably.

Compliance with the ethical principles and standards and George Fox University and of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2001) requires genuine respect for the dignity, welfare confidentiality rights of research participants. Such standards also call for a discussion of confidentiality to occur at the outset of the research process.

Informed Consent

Draft of an informed consent document was submitted to the Chair of the Research Committee. Upon approval, informed consent (see Appendix A) documents were sent electronically to research participants with a cover letter seeking informants' signature and stressing the importance of the document in protecting interviewees. Importance to the university and the researcher were also emphasized.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, several actions and processes were implemented. Of all computer-mediated communication (CMC) techniques considered by this researcher, phone interviews were preferred over e-mail inquiries because they bring a higher level of confidentiality. Participants were never asked to state their name or the name of their organization during the interview process. Instead, all participants were attributed a code. All efforts were made to ensure that used codes could by no means lead to the identification of informants. Audio recordings and data transcripts were

kept on a single password-protected computer with a single back up to prevent data loss. No audio files were uploaded to the transcription service provider until a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) had been properly signed. Files to be transcribed were uploaded to a secured website. Last, accuracy of data transcription was verified upon receipt of each transcribed file by comparing transcripts to interview notes and audio recordings.

Confirmability, Credibility, Transferability & Dependability

Validity and reliability constitute two fundamental notions traditionally associated with the positivist research paradigm and quantitative research in social science (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Nevertheless, their relevance and applicability to qualitative research have long been questioned in naturalistic literature (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, 2003; Golafshani, 2003; Horsburgh, 2003; Riege, 2003). While Patton (2001) affirms that qualitative researchers should still think in terms of validity and reliability in designing inquiries, analyzing data and assessing the quality of the research process, naturalistic scholars argue that contrasting research paradigms should use different criteria to assess the quality of their respective inquiries (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Riege, 2003; Stenbacka, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Such contentions led to the definition of alternative quality-measuring tests and criteria in qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba; 1985; Riege, 2003). *Confirmability* was proposed as the naturalistic equivalent of objectivity in quantitative research. Likewise, *credibility* was proposed as an alternative to internal validity, while the notion

of *transferability* was proposed as a substitute to external validity. Lastly, *dependability* became the qualitative equivalent of validity in quantitative research.

Riege (2003) effectively integrated such constructs in a model proposing a series of quality-enhancing tests and techniques in cases study and other types of qualitative research. This model was adapted by the researcher to assess the confirmability, credibility, transferability and dependability of his research.

Table 5

Design Tests and Qualitative Techniques Used to Ensure Research Quality

Design Tests	Qualitative Techniques Used	Corresponding Research Phase
Confirmability	Chain of Evidence Establishment	Data collection & analysis Researcher's diary and report writing
Credibility	Researcher Self-monitoring Corroboration	Research design Data collection & analysis
Transferability	Predetermined Questions Specific Procedures for Coding and Analysis	Research design Data collection & analysis
Dependability	Safeguarding Against the Researcher's Theoretical Position and Biases Reflexivity	Data analysis

Chain of Evidence Establishment

Establishing a chain of evidence occurred during the data collection and data analysis processes. The task involved reliance upon verbatim interview transcripts and maintenance of a detailed interview notes and records, during the data collection process.

The task also implied constant awareness of potential researcher biases, careful scrutiny of research findings, and thoughtful reflection about potential interpretations of research findings, during the data analysis process (Riege, 2003).

Researcher Self-monitoring

Riege (2003) and Merriam (1998) suggest researcher self-monitoring as a suitable technique to establish credibility throughout the data collection and data analysis processes. The task involves conducting the research in a manner leading to research credibility. To that extent, from research design to data collection and analysis, all prescribed fundamentals (e.g., research design, informed consent, data recording and transcription, interview notes, respect of ethical and confidentiality imperatives, electronic data analysis, etc.) were carefully considered and implemented.

Corroboration

Corroboration was also used to enhance the credibility of both the research process and findings. The technique aims at ensuring that the research findings accurately depict participants' answers while strengthening research and findings credibility (Stainback & Stainback, 1988). Lincoln and Guba (1985) further posit that fidelity should be built in the design process. To ensure fidelity, interviews were taped and detailed interview notes were taken throughout the research process to minimize any potential risk of misunderstanding, misinterpretation or misrepresentation. In addition, research findings were compared multiple times to original audio recordings and interview notes.

Predetermined Questions

Specific research questions were developed before conducting the research. They were submitted and approved by the researcher's committee.

Specific Procedures for Coding and Analysis

Consistent with literature recommendations (Riege, 2003; Yip, 1994), precise procedures (i.e., color coding, clustering, category creation, word frequency sorting, memoing) were used during the data analysis process to ensure transferability of data. Created codes were also compared across interviews in search of emerging patterns of meaning. As patterns emerged, the researcher made both manual and electronic notes to aggregate findings into core categories and relate findings to research questions.

Safeguarding Against Researcher's Theoretical Position and Biases

Throughout the research process, this researcher attempted to be constantly aware of the dangers of bias when conducting a scientific inquiry. However, the researcher understood the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research. "By means of reflexivity, the researcher realizes that (s)he is an integral part of the world that (s)he studies and that neutrality and detachment in relation to data collection, analysis and interpretation are impossible" (Horsburgh, 2003, p. 308).

The researcher recognizes that in spite of all scientific intentions, the study may have been affected by multiple types of bias. For example, omission or inclusive bias may have occurred during the sampling process. In spite of efforts made to identify and invite a broad selection of American expatriate managers, the purposive sampling

strategy may have induced bias when participants introduced professional acquaintances to the researcher. This may have created some inclusive bias if too many functions or industries were represented or some omission bias whenever other ones were not included. Although all efforts were made to set up interviews at participants' convenience, some type of procedural bias may have affected informants if they felt compelled (e.g., to please the referrer) to participate in the study or were rushed in their answers due to time or other commitments.

In addition, the nature of researched topics and the study's stated intention to identify Chinese cultural factors leading to culture shock or having a negative impact upon the socio-cultural adjustment of informants may have brought measurement bias to the study. For example, it is possible that some informants might have been too opinionated in their answers, while others played down their responses by fear of being negatively judged by the researcher. Since all participants were American, collected data may have possibly been affected by some form of ethnocentric bias as well.

The researcher himself may have introduced some form of bias by having inadvertently influenced informants through tone of voice or accent, or in the way questions were asked or answers to questions were acknowledged. Follow up questions too could have affected the interview process through lack of consistency. Moreover, informants themselves may have introduced bias by providing answers that they deemed expected by the researcher. Moreover, the researcher's own bi-cultural [Franco-American] background or emphasis on uncovering in the observed milieu elements having a negative socio-cultural influence, may have introduced bias during analysis or reporting of study findings (Creswell, 1994; Mehra, 2002; Shuttleworth, 2009).

The Pilot Study

A brief pilot study was implemented to achieve the following objectives: (a) to verify the effectiveness of retained CMC interviewing, recording, transcription and data analysis technologies; (b) to test and bring necessary modifications to the semi-structured questionnaire; (c) to inquire about the quantity and quality of data resulting from the interview process; (d) to remove potential bias from the instrument or interview process; and, (e) to quantify financial and time resources need to implement the full study.

Pilot study findings allowed the researcher to restructure the proposed questionnaire. Two background questions originally asked in the first part of the interview “How long do you plan on staying in China? Would you consider another assignment?” and “Do you have any additional comments?” were moved to the second half of the interview guide. One question “Can you think of specific Chinese cultural antecedents affecting the adjustment of American Expatriates?” was added to the first part of the interview guide. This brought the number of questions directly related to the investigation to 10, and the number of questions pertaining to participants’ backgrounds to 7. While the total number of questions asked increased from 16 to 17, the revised structured brought more balance to the questionnaire, and did not overwhelm informants. Placing the “Do you have any additional comments or observations?” question at the end of Part 2 as opposed to the end of the first section allowed some participants to keep bringing valuable data to the study. The new questionnaire was used successfully during the 14 interviews associated with the study. The average phone interview lasted 51 minutes (a positive development as the researcher originally expected much shorter

interviews). The pilot study thus affirmed the value of the CMC strategy as a worthy alternative to costly and time-consuming interview trips to China. It also confirmed the effectiveness of selected CMC technologies as no technological problem occurred during the pilot study and subsequent interviews.

To avoid data contamination, the pilot study participant was not invited to the second round of study.

Data Analysis

Conceptual Framework

The literature on qualitative research highlights the importance of coding techniques to identify emerging patterns within collected data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984, 1994; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Swanson & Holton, 2005). Janesick (2003) posits that “the process of reduction of data into a compelling, authentic and meaningful statement constitutes an end goal of qualitative research design” (p. 61). Janesick further affirms that qualitative inquirers must continually evaluate and enhance concepts when carrying out their research. They often use inductive analysis, which relies upon the use of categories, themes, and patterns emerging from collected data. This is consistent with Patton (1990) who sees the data analysis process as “. . . identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data” (p. 381). According to Janesick there is not such a thing as an ideal data analysis process. A qualitative researcher can either embrace established procedures presented in the literature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984, 1994; Patton, 1990) or

develop methodologies perceived as best suited for the task at hand. In the end, “. . . the ultimate decisions about the narrative reside with the researcher” (Janesick, 2003, p. 63).

However, there exists some disagreement among qualitative scholars about the timing of content code creation. Miles and Huberman (1984) affirm that needed content codes should be defined before conducting field research. Contrarily, for Lincoln and Guba (1985), Patton (1990) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), data coding should follow the research. Strauss and Corbin even affirm that nodes, codes and patterns will emerge naturally from the research findings and collected data. Janesick (2003) takes a middle of the road approach and recommends creating needed data categories through ongoing analysis, over research duration. Merriam (1988, 1992) concurs and suggest conducting data collection and analysis concurrently. This latter strategy was the one retained for this analysis.

Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process involved several critical steps.

(a) All interviews were recorded using the Skype-supported call-recording application (Call Burner, 2011). The process created .MP3 audio files that were saved on the researcher’s computer. This methodology was positively tested during the pilot study. Each file was carefully labeled using confidential codes created by the researcher. All codes were tracked on a spreadsheet and researcher’s notes.

(b) During and after each interview, the researcher took ample manual notes to highlight key points made by informants and keep track of interview related data (i.e., interview date, interview duration, informant code, location, tenure, etc.).

(c) .MP3 files were subsequently electronically uploaded to the secured Website of an academically-recognized and contracted transcription services organization (GMR Transcription Services, 2011), after a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) had been signed by the two parties. To permit prompt and ongoing data analysis, interview files were transcribed within a few weeks of interview recording as opposed to submitting all files in a batch mode after the 14th interview. The researcher was notified via e-mail of file transcription completion; this allowed him to access a secured Website and to download the transcribed MS Word (Microsoft, 2011) documents.

(d) Transcribed files were then printed and read. Important data were highlighted and margin notes were made. Manual notes about emerging themes were made as well. They were then compared to original audio files to verify transcription accuracy. A few typos and mistakes related to sound quality were caught and edited.

(e) In parallel, electronic transcription files were uploaded to a recognized qualitative data analysis software application. Two leading applications were originally considered: NVivo 9 (QSR International, 2011) and MAXQDA 10 (VERBI GmbH, 2011). Trial versions of the two applications were tested. Ultimately, the MAXQDA 10 application was used due to a combination of affordability, ease of use, access to tutorials and technical support. This is consistent with computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) literature (Lu & Shulman, 2008; Saillar, 2011; Tesch, 1990).

(f) All 14 interview transcripts were uploaded, and their entire content was analyzed during both the manual and electronic data analysis processes.

(g) Parallel electronic and manual iterative analyses of interview transcripts were conducted in search of patterns, redundancies, confirmations and categories of meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Thomson, 2011).

(h) Again, electronic files were read and data were codified using several features (i.e., color coding, clustering, category creation, word frequency sorting, memoing), and journal notes were made all along (Lu & Shulman, 2008; Saillar, 2011; Tesch, 1990).

(i) Created codes were then compared across interviews in search of emerging patterns of meaning. As patterns emerged, the researcher made both manual and electronic notes to aggregate findings into core categories and relate findings to research questions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

(j) Patterns and categories of meanings were once again compared to original interview transcripts and notes.

(k) Ultimately, the researcher was looking for a point of theoretical saturation among uncovered patterns and categories. This point of theoretical saturation varied among categories of meaning. For example, the number of informants confirming exposure to depression was lower than the number of informants reporting feelings of frustrations. Similarly, the uncovered phase of nostalgia was reported by well-acclulturated informants and was not therefore reported by informants new to their foreign assignments.

(l) Ultimately, the researcher decided when the point of theoretical saturation had been reached among uncovered patterns and categories of meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Thomson, 2011).

(m) However, constant awareness of potential researcher biases, careful scrutiny of research findings, and thoughtful reflection about potential interpretations of research findings were considered during the data analysis process to maximize confirmability, credibility, transferability and dependability (Riege, 2003).

(n) After the 11th or 12th interview, data redundancy occurred. That was a clear indication that the study had achieved some of its goals. Nonetheless, two more interviews were conducted to ensure appropriateness of sample size and test the level of saturation. Data resulting from these interviews were consistent with previously-identified patterns of meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Thomson, 2011).

The whole process allowed the researcher to not only better understand the phenomena under investigation, but the people studied as well (Patton, 1990).

Summary

To identify the broad array of Chinese cultural factors that contribute to the culture shock of American business expatriates working in mainland China and have a negative influence upon their sociocultural adjustment, 14 informants were interviewed.

The exploratory study took advantage of CMC methodologies in identifying, approaching, communicating with and, ultimately, interviewing participants. The purposeful and convenient sample was gathered through the researcher's personal contacts in the expatriate community and with government agencies (e.g., Oregon Business Development Department, U.S. Embassy personnel, etc.), as well as participants' referrals.

Informants were located in 4 major Chinese cities. Their average expatriate tenure in mainland China is ten years. The average phone interview lasted 51 minutes. All interviews provided the researcher with a large volume of rich, meaningful and contextually-situated data.

Data collection and computer-assisted (MAXQDA10) data analysis were conducted concurrently until collected data became redundant. Particular emphasis was placed upon ethical and scientific research, attainment of a point of theoretical saturation among uncovered categories of meaning, and confirmability, credibility, transferability and dependability of findings.

Chapter IV presents the findings resulting from the 14 interviews as emerging patterns of meaning based upon the input and perspectives of study informants.

Chapter V brings forward a discussion about such findings with particular emphasis upon their implications for American expatriate managers, expatriation candidates, and their employers.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

General Level of Socio-Cultural Adaptation of Informants

Expatriates' Overall Experience

As a group, study participants were generally positive about their experience as business expatriates working in mainland China. However, their responses encompassed a broad array of reactions. Some described their experience as “quite good” or “very enjoyable” while other expatriates reported having “mixed feelings.” One expatriate respondent reported: “My experience, I would have to say is mixed. You know, there’s good and there’s bad, and you know, I think how I feel about the issue really depends upon where I was in my ten years in expat over here.”

Some saw the experience as a “great adventure”, a “learning opportunity” or as representing a “cauldron of opportunity.” Yet, another participant reported that his initial feeling was “hating it” [*sic*] until being convinced by his China-loving spouse to take an expatriate assignment. The participant stated: “My wife had come here four times with the government and loved it. When this opportunity fell in my lap, she really jumped at the chance. I thought there must be something I’m missing if I hated it so much and she loved it so much. So let’s give it a try.”

A majority of participants reported strong levels of cross-cultural adaptation, and three respondents married a Chinese citizen. All highlighted the gradual nature of the adaptive process and all contributed to the study by reporting factors perceived as having a negative influence over the intercultural adjustment of ABEs. Although several participants mentioned feeling the initial sense of elation, excitement and euphoria typically characterizing the honeymoon phase of Culture Shock Theory when first exposed to Chinese culture, two expatriates reported feeling a negative initial reaction. One participant responded: “. . . I will say that off that first trip I hated [*sic*] China. It was the middle of the summer. It was hot. It was miserably hot. I was dealing with the Chinese government in a government capacity. It just wasn't an easy dealing.” Another respondent who studied Mandarin in China while in high-school and college before becoming a business expatriate added: “I did not fall in love on my first trip with China. And then I came here in college . . . even my first semester, I didn't really like it.”

A respondent who has lived in China for 13 years even reported having had negative feelings toward the idea of living in China, before becoming an expatriate there. This well-experienced expatriate stated that when asked by friends what country could become his next expatriate assignment, he always responded: “Well, the last country on the list would be China.” Nonetheless, the respondent added: “. . . I've adapted well.”

With regards to future plans and prolonged living in China, expatriates fell into four basic categories. A first group reported being too new in their expatriate assignment to have made any plans for the future; at this point, they are simply trying to meet their professional obligations and adapt to a challenging cross-cultural environment.

A second group of participants sees China as being part of their professional and economic future. One respondent in that category stated: “Well, for me China is sort of my economic niche because I had worked here before and I speak the language and so it’s sort of became a place where I am able to make money.”

Three expatriates are calling China home. They have not only lived in China for an extensive length of time (more than ten years) and have fallen in love with Chinese people, hospitality and culture; they see their native United States as a country with no future economic opportunity. A few highly-experienced expatriates also reported concerns about potential age discrimination and doubtful employment opportunities if ever deciding to leave China to work in the U.S. One participant who does business consulting already decided to retire in China.

One expatriate who married a Chinese citizen indicated: “I’ve seen the country change from a place that I thought was kind of a challenge to live in, to a place that is now a world class destination So now I’d be considered probably more of a half-pat [*sic*] than an expat because my wife is from Beijing, and I have lots of Chinese friends and family. . . . I’m probably heavier on the Chinese side than the expat side. . . .”

A fourth group of respondents reported that although they truly value their Chinese experience, they are ready to move on. One member of that group stated:

I say my feelings are mixed at this point. I’ve really been blessed to be here. It’s the beginnings of China’s opening up to the world, and I’ve seen just immense changes, and it’s been very exciting. But at the same time, you know, I get tired of it after 14 years, and I want to move on.

A different participant who acknowledged the career-related benefits resulting from expatriate work in China, reported strong family concerns and stated:

I'm a father, I have two kids. And I know that it's good for my career to be over here, but as far as they're [*sic*], I'm not seeing and thinking through their development and then how living in China may have an effect on them; not long physically but health and the pollution and other issues over here, but also with their mental growth [*sic*].

Evidence of a U-Curve Pattern of Culture Shock

This exploratory study did achieve its purpose and uncovered within the Chinese cultural environment numerous factors contributing to the culture shock of ABEs working in China, and having a negative influence over their intercultural adjustment. As findings were analyzed, several trends emerged. First, the notion of culture shock did surface as many expatriates either directly referred to the construct by using terms such as “culture shock,” “shock,” or “shocking” and described symptoms (i.e., disorientation, frustrations, etc.) or dimensions associated with Culture Shock Theory (e.g.: honeymoon, excitement, disintegration, adjustment, adaptation or acculturation). Moreover, the fact that so many of these constructs were explicitly expressed by expatriates or implied in the description of their experiences (see Table 6) further supports evidence of a U-curve pattern of adjustment, so often associated with Culture Shock Theory.

In the words of one of the respondents, “The adjustment process is, obviously, multi-staged.” Another respondent further added:

. . . when you first arrive in any foreign country, China in particular, it's really exciting when you first land. And it's really challenging, and it's challenging to learn the language. It's challenging to figure out life and understand the culture and the people. So... it's so overwhelming with regard to making a living, doing your job, and then trying to deal with all the cultural aspects that are problematic in coming to a country like this. But as time rolls on and you get used to the culture, you learn a little of the language, you get integrated into society.

Such a statement directly refers to the U-shape model of cultural adjustment reported in the literature to represent the shift between expatriates' initial excitement and the progressive reduction of that original euphoria until progressive adaptation finally occurs. In addition, research findings indicate that several aspects of Chinese culture do indeed appear to contribute to the culture shock of ABEs working in the PRC, and affect their general, work and interactive degrees of adjustment.

Table 6
Culture Shock and U-Curve Theory Constructs Referred to by Study Participants

Phase Of Culture Shock based upon the U-Curve Model	Direct Reference	Indirect Reference
Phase 1	Honeymoon Euphoria and Excitement	Elation Cultural encounter
Phase 2	Frustration Culture Shock Depression	Crisis Hostility Disintegration
Phase 3	Adjustment	
Phase 4	Adaptation Adjustment	Acculturation Bi-culturalism New identity

Table 6 describes informant-referred constructs and how they pertain to the U-Curve model. While eight of the constructs described in Culture Shock and U-Curve literature were directly referred to by study participants, another eight were indirectly referred to or described in this exploratory study. All 16 constructs pertained to the four phases of the U-Curve model associated with Culture Shock Theory.

Phase 1: Honeymoon, Elation, Euphoria, Excitement and Cultural Encounter

Most of the study participants described the initial phase of excitement, elation or euphoria that often characterizes initial encounter with a foreign cultural environment. One participant stated: “Well, first couple of years are very exciting. It’s thrilling. It’s challenging.” Another one described his thoughts when first exposed to the Chinese culture and said: “So, I suppose the first two or three years I was here, I would have said: ‘Being an expat is great! It’s wonderful!’ . . . it’s just the most exciting, vibrant thing that I could imagine.”

Some participants directly referred to the honeymoon phase of U-Curve Theory (UCT). One participant expressed the following: “. . . you have your honeymoon period, and then you have your disillusionment people [*sic*], etc. You have to always sort of strive to get a foothold.” Another one described the transition from honeymoon to culture shock and said: “I, myself, I have had the whole honeymoon thing in one year when it was like the first two months, ‘Woo-hoo [*sic*], I’m here in China!”

Phase 2: The Crisis Phase of Culture Shock

A majority of study participants commented at length upon their exposure to the crisis phase of culture shock. Culture shock occurred for multiple reasons. Some of the participants had previously worked in Japan; culture shock occurred when witnessing the sharp contrasts between Japanese and Chinese cultural environments. One expatriate commented: “So that was a big shock, having come from Japan. I didn’t know there was such a huge problem between the two cultures, but there is.”

For other participants, culture shock occurred when being suddenly exposed to different cultural norms and values. One participant shared the following:

But over here, you’re just exposed not only to China but a whole world of different values and cultures. It’s with the good comes the bad. It’s great to be exposed to it, but it just makes life all that more complicated.

Another participant explained that culture shock occurred when cultural reality brought him down from unrealistic expectations:

...at the embassy, fortunately, you’re given a briefing that says you get here and mentally and physically you’re on a high [*sic*]. You’re excited about being here. But eventually, you’ll crash. That did happen to me. Probably about four months into it, I crashed. I’d been on such a high [*sic*]. Everything was new. We were traveling. I was working with the ambassador . . .

Several respondents commented upon the utmost foreignness of Chinese culture; one highlighted how the most basic hand signs did not improve communication between host nationals and foreigners who do not speak Mandarin. The participant stated:

. . . we were shocked by how foreign everything was. The grocery store; you can't read anything, you can't understand anything. You basically communicate through random sign language that oftentimes doesn't work . . . as an example, if you want three of something or seven, you want seven apples. And you try and do seven fingers like you would in the West, they don't use the same fingers to use as numbers. So it's those little things that you learn . . . that seemed like the one that we would connect on, but even sign language was difficult.

The need for constant negotiation too appeared as a culture shock contributor.

One respondent explained:

When you go to a supermarket, you don't just pick out stuff and go to the check stand, you go to a stall and you walk through different stalls and each stall has a vendor and you negotiate for the price of food. So, nothing is given, even like the price that you pay for food on any given day.

A business expatriate expressed quite graphically the feelings, frustrations and sense of crisis associated with the transition from the honeymoon period to the culture shock phase. He stated:

The first couple of years are like a big vacation. It's like a big, huge game or chess game, if you will, to figure it out. Then life hits you and you wake up in the morning, and you say: . . . 'The air sucks [*sic*]. It's really loud. I can't get any peace and quiet. I'm so tired of dealing with the traffic and the bullshit [*sic*] food and the problems at the office', and this and that.

The relentless pace at which Chinese society moves and is being transformed constitutes a factor that was consistently mentioned by respondents. One expatriate clearly summarized what other respondents had already alluded to:

You read articles about it. You see things on TV, all this stuff. But until you live in the center of it, you don't – it really doesn't hit home. And so getting here and seeing that and knowing, like I said, four months have gone by and I'm missing entire weeks, and you're going 1,000 miles an hour, I think that's the part that almost becomes the biggest shock.

A participant further illustrated how the unrelenting work schedule of most expatriates living in China can quickly erase their initial sense of elation, excitement or euphoria. He said:

. . . for me, the biggest challenge has been the fact that work hours are 24/7. And that's not just because I'm working with an American company. It is the most important work is done over meals, which would be lunch or preferably dinner if you're a good contact and on weekends, where coming from America, you're used to 9:00 to 5:00; don't call me after 4:00 because I'm probably not going to answer. And don't call me on the weekend.

The Disorientation Aspect of Culture Shock

The notion of disorientation presented by culture shock scholars as a symptom of culture shock did surface throughout study interviews. One respondent compared newcomers to China as “infants” and declared:

We're all like infants when we go over there. And we're just learning from scratch, so after you learn how to do it, then you understand. But I think we all

tend to complain too much instead of spreading our energy and focus on learning how to do things and learning them well, and getting it out of the way.

Another respondent alluded to the fact that only a prolonged sojourn to a developing country could really prepare a new expatriate for the realities of living in China. The expatriate affirmed:

I think that, first of all, wiping out any notion of what – how you've experienced living abroad before. Unless you've lived abroad for a long period of time in a complete third-world country, then there's really – excuse me [*sic*] – no other experience than living in China. The hard part with China is you show up and you see these massive buildings. You see tons of people . . .

One interviewee further illustrated the notion of cultural disorientation by explaining that one can never be certain of ever attaining cross-cultural mastery. He explained: “You know, I've been here five years. I think it's still a daily struggle. I think it's – just when you think you have it figured out, they throw something at you that completely throws you off.” One respondent described how the disorienting effect that exposure to crowds and masses can have upon newcomers. Chinese individuals have always been exposed to masses and have adapted their behavior; most Americans have not. He explained:

Here it's just every man for himself.... Here, everyone's right, and everyone else is wrong.... Chinese people are very warm, very nice, but they also have this side to them that I guess in the West, it would say that doesn't make sense, and it doesn't make sense because they were always used to not standing in line, just running up there, and if you can get in front of somebody else, then, that's okay.

The Frustrations Aspect of Culture Shock

The notion of frustration described in culture shock literature consistently appeared among interview responses. It is a prevalent construct that confirms the impact of the Chinese cultural environment over study participants. One informant stated: “So it can be frustrating and complex. So perseverance is very important in China because it’s not as simple as getting things done in the United States.”

A second expatriate found the heavier power distance dimension of Chinese culture frustrating. He declared: “And, here in China, when I’m consulting people, it’s maddeningly frustrating, the whole power-distance thing [*sic*].”

Another respondent further described how the inherent complexity of the Chinese cultural environment can consume one’s time and generate deep frustrations and stated:

But in China, if you have ten things, you may get two things done, and you’ll be frustrated by the other eight you can’t get done. It’s just a matter of time, a matter of the bureaucracy it takes to get through those two things. It can wear you down until you realize, okay, this is just the way it is.

A fourth participant underscored the extent of his frustrations by using the term several times in a few consecutive sentences. He expressed the following:

. . . lifestyle changes between the U.S. and here are just unimaginable before you land. I said earlier, living here is a little bit like living in New York. . . . It’s incredibly inconvenient. It’s incredibly frustrating not to have the comforts of life that we’re used to. It’s incredibly frustrating just to try to catch a taxi on a rainy day and then try to communicate with the taxi driver to take you where you want

to go. It's incredibly frustrating not to be able to turn on your television and watch the news or the programs that you want to watch...

The same informant drew attention upon additional Chinese living experiences triggering frustrations, and gave the following details:

It's incredibly frustrating to say to yourself 'I want to go golfing but I need to find someone with an incredibly expensive golf membership; and I need to budget two or three hundred U.S. dollars for the day'. It's incredibly frustrating just to deal with going to a grocery store and saying 'God this place stinks [*sic*]; I'm not sure if the food I'm eating is clean.' Then I can go to a foreign grocery store but then I'm gonna pay five times the price . . .

A fifth expatriate stressed the difficulties and frustrations resulting from attempts to learn Mandarin.

Hostility, Depression and Disintegration Aspects of Culture Shock

A few respondents alluded to the hostility, disintegration and depression stage of Culture Shock Theory by employing expressions such as "crash", "depression" and "loss of control", or affirming that expatriates should require their employers to provide them by contract to easy access to a counseling program.

One expatriate vividly described the depressive phase resulting from an exhausting travel schedule, and reported:

We were traveling all over the place, putting in 60, 70-hour weeks for a good . . . two and half months or so, just getting up to speed on things. Then I, eventually, did crash. So it was a depression of sorts; a functioning depression, but a depression . . . 'What am I doing here? I hate everything about this place. I hate

it!' [*sic*] Fortunately, again, the embassy had given us that briefing that had forewarned that this was going to happen.

Another participant described the process leading to depression in pretty similar terms and emphasized that this phase of depression can last for years. A respondent alluded to the fact that facing a phase of depression is almost ineluctable and that expatriates considering assignments to the PRC should negotiate expatriation contracts granting access to clinical counseling. The informant stipulated:

So, I warn everybody that comes through now – expats especially – that they should ask their company if they have some sort of counseling program, and that this, eventually, will hit them. It is true.... It may be two months from now. It may be a year from now; but you will go through this period, especially if you've never lived abroad.

A participant described the disintegration phenomenon by using terms such "losing it," "explode" and "lash out". He explained: "Your personal reactions you can't really control when you're in certain stressful situations over a long period of time."

Phase 3: Adjustment

Several participants described the changes occurring from a phase of frustration, disintegration and culture shock to a phase of cross-cultural adaptation. A participant explained "You finally start to adjust, to accept life here and just dealing with the challenges of being an expat in a very strange country." Another expatriate added: "I don't know how I would describe the adjustment process itself, but I think just being on the ground level for six months, I got used to it." A third respondent commented: ". . .

eventually, you get back to a place that's a more normal place; not a complete high, not a complete low. But you understand . . . you're gonna have frustrations. You're gonna have some great days and some highs and lows. That's part of being here."

Another added:

Generally speaking, I've been here now on and off for about 12 years. So I enjoy it. It's always been a challenge. It's always been interesting. There are moments and times where the local culture can frustrate you, but you just have to take that as a part of the overall picture. The parts that annoy you come with a much bigger benefit of the overall situation that you live in. Generally speaking, if I compare it to living in the U.S., I've chosen to live here for more than just financial reasons.

One more respondent described with great details the psychological shift occurring between the second phase of the U-curve model and the subsequent adjustment. He explained:

Well, it took about six months for me to adjust completely. The first few weeks, I just really did not like being in China at all. I thought it was dirty. I thought it was chaotic. I thought it was out of control. People didn't obey rules. Traffic rules were just ignored. People spitting and [*sic*] – so it was just a huge shock after coming from a place like Japan. So that process took a half a year. But I think just being on the ground level every day, I started to realize the good things and positive things about China, the human aspect of it. And I started to overlook some of those things that bothered me when I first arrived.

A respondent brought forward both the substantial regional disparities existing among Chinese provinces and the implications of such differences on expatriate

adjustment. He posited: “. . . regional differences are quite a bit larger, than you find in the U.S. So, anyway, that makes it just a continuing process for me to adjust to Chinese culture. I think I’ll be adjusting as long as I’m breathing.”

Some respondents placed emphasis upon the role of personal characteristics in the adjustment process. One respondent stated: “So, I’d say I’ve adjusted well, but I would say it also doesn’t matter where I am in the world because I would be this way.” Another expatriate further highlighted the importance of respect for the host culture in easing up adjustment and declared: “I have to come from a place of genuine respect for the people and the culture.”

Another participant commented upon the role that trust and respect play toward effective adaptation. He asserted:

. . . other people . . . do very well here because their own culture has lots of traditions of respect and trust building. And people . . . like that, with that attitude, are able to be successful here with Chinese people . . .”

One informant commented upon the fact that overall family adjustment does considerably affect an expatriate’s personal adjustment. He declared:

. . . with any expat, typically most of them will have a wife and family. And, there’s no doubt that the happiness of the wife and family is something they have to pay attention to . . . he needs to pay attention and makes sure, I think, that his family is adjusted.

A respondent contrasted the notions of adjustment and *tolerance* and proclaimed: “I have very little adjustment to Chinese culture; I have tolerance.” A co-respondent commented that the perception of adjustment felt by an expatriate can vary. He said:

Sometimes I feel like I've adjusted really well. I can go out to dinner, have a good time. I can work in a Chinese office and I don't generally have a problem with it. Other times I feel like I'm completely maladjusted.

Participants also commented upon the importance that Chinese language fluency plays in the adjustment process. An informant summed up collective thinking by saying: ". . . in China, if you don't speak Chinese, there is this big gulf between you and your surroundings. You feel quite isolated."

Another participant expressed sadness at the fact that, in his view, foreigners can never be fully adjusted to Chinese culture because they will never be fully accepted. He declared: "I think, overall... as a foreigner, you'll never be fully adjusted here. You're never gonna [*sic*] be fully accepted . . ."

Comments about the notion of adaptation covered a broad range of reactions from feelings of clear adaptation to feelings of confusion and uncertainty. Other participants deplored that genuine adaptation attempts were not properly rewarded by host nationals.

Another expatriate stressed the importance that personal goals and attitude play in the adaptive process. He said:

If your goal is to come on a corporate assignment for three years and survive, then the adjustment process is gonna [*sic*] be depending heavily on those people around you that take care of you. And there's [*sic*] a lot of people like that too so they don't really have to invest nearly as much in adjusting to the culture.

One expatriate emphasized the progressive and gradual nature of the adjustment process while highlighting some of the challenges related to cross-cultural adaptation. He

distinguished between truly adapting and simply surviving constant cross-cultural challenges. He gave the following explanation:

It kind of happens one dinner and one relationship at a time. It's gradual. There are moments where the culture can be overwhelming, so you're on a bus in the middle of the Sichuan Province, and it's already overcrowded, and they bring on ten more farmers that are spitting on the floor. You might just hit the wall and want to hit one of them [*sic*]. . . . So there are intense things like that, but that's not adapting to the culture; that's just surviving it at that moment.

One more expatriate further described some of the adaptive hurdles he faced and the length of time needed to overcome such challenges. He reported:

. . . when I moved to Shanghai, it was very chaotic, it was a big shock to my system because of all the chaos. And it just seemed like things were out of control. But I think it took about six months for me to get used to it.

One respondent declared having mixed feelings about his level of adaptation; he confided:

. . . I don't think that I've really adapted so that I would adapt myself to Chinese culture or anything like that. I mean, I don't change the way I behave. I eat Chinese food, I guess. I use chopsticks, of course. And, I don't drive a car. I use taxis or buses. I think that, I haven't really adapted myself, but then again when I had friends come here, they said that they'd have a lot of difficulty working here, so maybe that means I have adapted in some ways to life here.

Phase 4: Acculturation. New Identity & Bi-culturalism

One expatriate's comments illustrated the notions of acculturation, new identity and bi-culturalism described in Culture Shock Theory when he described himself as an *egg [sic]* or someone who is "white on the outside but yellow inside." The notion was often contrasted to that of *banana [sic]* as Chinese citizens often see Asians overly influenced by Western culture as being "yellow outside but white inside." He described:

I'm pretty Chinese. I'm an egg [sic] for sure . . . it's interesting; the longer you're here, the less you realize it. And then I've tried to stay true to who I am and the way I was brought up. But it's sometimes challenging. You really don't even realize it. I've been told that my mannerisms . . . and the way I speak are very much Chinese, even when I'm speaking English. So I would definitely describe myself as being fluent in Chinese. I can go into a room with Chinese and forget I'm even American.

A second interviewee referred to that metaphor and commented:

I was recently talking to a friend of mine who was recommending me for a senior position in a different company, and he said: 'don't worry . . . I told them that you're an egg [sic]; white on the outside and yellow on the inside'. So I guess you'd say my level of acculturation is fairly high at this point.

Nostalgia - Regrets and Second Thoughts

Study findings suggest that some well adapted and fully acculturated expatriates may have reached a phase that goes beyond the phase of adaptation, acculturation or bi-culturalism described in Culture Shock literature. I refer to this phase as one of *Nostalgia*,

as it is characterized by *regrets* or *second thoughts*. One expatriate who has lived in China for 14 years and married a Chinese citizen declared:

I start thinking: 'I've been here too long. I need a little bit more comfort in my life. It's not a bad place to live, but I want a car and a tree and a bird in the tree, and I want to do things that I've missed from back home'. You get to the point where you say to yourself: 'How much am I giving up by living here?' And for many people, you're giving up a lot. For example, you start to lose track of friends in the US. You start to go home, and the phone isn't ringing because it's just family that knows you're there.

The respondent further added:

No matter how well your Chinese becomes, you're never going to become integrated into society here. It's never going to be comfortable to go watch a movie. You're never going to really say to yourself: 'I just love it here so much. I can't think of doing anything else on a week except hanging out with my Chinese friends.... And you start to add up mentally all the things that you've given up by living here long-term, and once you've reached a level of financial security, you say to yourself: 'Why am I continuing on when the lifestyle issues here aren't giving me the life I can enjoy? The money is not worth it'.

A second and well-adapted respondent, who has studied in China during high-school and college, and lived in China for eight years over a period of 15 years, shared similar views. This individual stated concerns about the impact that long-time exposure to the Chinese environment can have over the health, mental and physical development of his children. The same person shared concerns about the potential consequences of a K-

12 education acquired in Chinese international schools when stating: “I have them in Chinese international hybrid schools and questioning every day. Always a challenge!”

The informant further described how he is constantly wrestling with attempts to conciliate exposure to two different cultures. Referring to the American and Chinese cultures, the two cultures he had been exposed to, the expatriate declared:

“... it’s constantly a thought on your mind . . . here in China, you’re just exposed not only to China but a whole world of different values and cultures. It’s with the good comes the bad . . . it makes life all that more complicated.”

A fully-aculturated informant reported that in spite of his 16-year tenure living in China, he would have no remorse living the country. He stated: “I am not tied to China . . . I would go to Brazil in a heartbeat.” Similarly, another fully-adapted expatriate who has lived in China for 12 years declared: “. . . I don’t see myself living in China indefinitely.”

In addition, external factors in the Chinese socio-cultural and legal environment, negatively affect some fully-aculturated expatriates by denying them the hope of ever being considered as genuine members of a community they are so fond of. That too triggers negative feelings, self-doubts and second thoughts. One informant declared: “. . . you’re never going to be Chinese. You can’t even get Chinese citizenship.”

Chinese Cultural Factors Having a Negative Influence on the Degree of General Adjustment

Several categories of Chinese cultural factors contributing to the culture shock of American business expatriates and having a negative impact over their degree of general

adjustment arose from the study. These factors play at two levels. First, they contribute to the disillusion and frustrations associated with transition from the honeymoon to the crisis phases of culture shock. At a second level, they prevent effective transition from the crisis phase to subsequent adjustment. Some of the categories (i.e., complexity of Mandarin language, importance of guanxi, government intervention, poor infrastructure, pollution, etc.) have been reported and commented upon in the literature; others such as the impact that the perceived complexity or reported moral flexibility of Chinese society are having on ABEs, emerged from the study. Another study contribution comes from the multiple sub-categories of factors associated with each category. Uncovered factors and sub-factors are summarized in tables presented under each reported category.

Communication Challenges

Table 7

Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Communication Challenges

Factors	Sub-factors
Communication Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language and Language Barriers - Direct vs. Indirect Communication - Subtleties - Speaking Softly Is A Must - Different Thinking and Reasoning Patterns - Cautious Communication Without Definite Answers - Learning How to Ask the Right Questions - High vs. Low Power Distance - Cheng Yu's

Language and Language Barriers

One of the most important themes to emerge from all interviews associated with this study is the critical role played by communication challenges in contributing to the culture shock of ABEs and having a potentially negative effect upon their general adjustment. Language barriers are foremost among these challenges. Participants ranked themselves into four categories of language fluency ranking from *beginner* to *conversant*, to *proficient* and *fluent*. All expressed the view that their experience as expatriates has been greatly affected by their ability to speak or not to speak Mandarin. One expatriate expressed the following opinion: “I think language is a huge barrier and also just understanding is a huge barrier.” A second interviewee commented: “So I think that was the biggest thing when we got here; just how many Chinese don’t speak English.”

Another respondent stressed the reliance that American expatriates and their employers place upon English-speaking natives to overcome their own Chinese-speaking shortfalls. He reported:

I would say they’re hired for somewhat of their English ability.... They just don’t speak English. Even if they speak it a little bit, they’re so embarrassed about speaking it because it’s not good, they’ll act like they don’t understand you. So, it is a lot of having to have crutches of sorts, whether it’s a card in Chinese to show the taxi where to go, whether it’s a good base knowledge or being able to point, basically, at a lot of things.

One more informant reported that local dialects too can negatively affect one’s willingness to learn Mandarin. He declared: “Trying to learn Mandarin in Shanghai was difficult because the locals speak Shanghainese dialect. So, it’s completely different

from Mandarin. And those that speak Mandarin cannot understand – necessarily understand Shanghai dialect, so that was frustrating.”

Yet, another participant described the extreme importance of language in allowing expatriates to function in the Chinese cultural environment by declaring: “I think that the [adjustment] process is pretty long. Language is a huge part of it again.”

Although degrees of language fluency greatly affect culture shock and adaptation, they only represent one aspect of the multiple communication challenges faced by American business expatriates working in China.

Direct vs. Indirect Communication

In addition to the inherent difficulties resulting from sharp language barriers, several study participants commented upon the communication challenges resulting from different patterns of communication. Of prime importance is the tension existing between Americans’ preferred direct and linear modes of expression and Chinese preference for indirect and wholistic patterns of communication. One of the respondents explained such differences quite clearly when expressing the following: “Basically, the direct Western way of preferred interaction . . . especially in the U.S., is considered not necessarily the right way to do things over here in Asia, So, here the direct way of communication is considered rather impolite.”

A second expatriate added: “. . . you will often rely on indirect communication.”

A third informant expressed a similar view and said:

Often I will ask people a direct question, and if they’re not sure what I want to hear, they will do anything except answer the question.... I ask a basic question about marketing . . . and what comes back is the economic history of China.

In addition to the inherent tension existing between linear and wholistic modes of communication, Chinese emphasis upon context exacerbates the tremendous time pressures faced by expatriates. A respondent declared: “Direct versus indirect communication . . . that’s just a never-ending challenge.”

Subtleties

Several respondents also used the term *subtleties* when discussing the perceived indirectness of Chinese communication. One of them declared: “. . . Chinese people are in some ways more subtle than Americans and more indirect.”

Another participant confirmed such view and stated:

And if you’re here as an American expatriate, and you come here with the expectations of an American and with American values, you will get in trouble very quickly . . . And if you don’t realize the subtleties . . . you’re not going to be as effective . . .

A third participant added: “Here, the subtleties and the indirect way of communication are really considered the way that you should deal with people. So, the personal relationships here, the personal interactions, are quite different from what you would find in the U.S.”

Speaking Softly Is A Must

A third expatriate confirmed the indirectness of the Chinese patterns of communication and added two more dimensions: the refusal to ever express a direct conclusion and the need to speak softly. He declared:

And you also learn in a business setting, you speak quietly. You don’t often state your conclusion directly. Or if you do, you find a soft way to say it so that people

don't feel that you're blaming them for something and start to give you their shame reaction, which can be pretty hard to deal with.

A fellow participant concurred and expressed similar views:

It tends to be indirect.... I am very careful in meetings. I would do this anyway because I'm a bit more introverted. But I'm careful to keep my voice level, keep my hands still . . . be indirect and allow people time to respond; but also, give people a framework to speak from. If you sort of leave the microphone open, people get a bit nervous.

However, the general tendency toward Chinese individuals' indirect patterns of communication can greatly vary among individuals. A respondent indicated that contrary to American etiquette, a Chinese person would not hesitate to tell someone that he or she “. . . wears ugly pants.”

Different Thinking and Reasoning Patterns

Another participant emphasized how different patterns of thinking and reasoning negatively affect communication between expatriates and Chinese nationals. He replied:

One of the main things about Chinese people, about the way they communicate, is that they always put reason first and then conclusion, instead of the bottom line. So, Americans say ‘this is broken, and this is what happened’. A Chinese person says, ‘Because of this, because of this, because of this happened [*sic*]’. And, so you hear a lot of ‘because, because, because, because . . .’ before you get to the endpoint and it sounds like they’re making an excuse, which is they’re not making excuses, this is just the way that they have been taught to communicate.

Such statements exemplify the contrasts and tensions resulting from American direct and linear patterns of reasoning and communication, and the value placed by Chinese culture upon wholistic thinking. A third expatriate expressed the view that Chinese individuals always tend to question the question and the reasons why someone is actually asking a given question. He declared: “When I asked somebody Chinese a question, they’re not only worried about the question itself, they’re actually asking themselves at the same time why is he asking me this.”

This once again demonstrates the great emphasis that Chinese culture places upon connecting parts. Whereas in the West, a direct answer to a direct question is preferred, Chinese reasoning needs to first understand the context surrounding the question.

Cautious Communication and No Definite Answers

Participants commented upon the fact that due to several reasons, fear has affected the general structure of Chinese communication. According to the respondents, the fear factor has both historical and cultural connotations. For example, throughout Chinese history, individuals had to be very careful about what they said as a wrong word could end one’s life. Seventy years of communism seem to have further reinforced the need for individual to express themselves with caution. An expatriate explained:

Anybody that’s been through the Cultural Revolution is completely different than the younger people. And I would say, people that were born from the 1980s-forward, they’re all very relatively cooperative, relatively eager and keen to learn, relatively eager to volunteer for things, and take chances. But the people born before the ‘80s, they’re not willing to take chances. They’re not willing to raise

their head and volunteer for things. They don't write things down. So they're very hesitant to give their opinions and so forth.

Participants shared an overall impression that as a result of such fears, Chinese citizens tend to be far less affirmative in their responses than Western individuals. One expatriate summed up the view of fellow interviewees when declaring: "Chinese people will also talk with much less definite answers."

Learning How to Ask the Right Questions

Some respondents also highlighted the importance of questioning and most particularly the necessity to ask pertinent questions in a cross-cultural communication environment. One of the informants stated:

If you ask a question and get a nonsense answer back, it doesn't mean that somebody is withholding information, and it doesn't necessarily mean that the person is incompetent at their job. They may not have understood the question. They may not feel comfortable giving you an answer. But you can repeat the question softly, and sometimes, you have to explain in more depth what you really mean.

A fellow study participant supported the view and added: "If you know the right way to ask a question, you can get the same thing done . . . that's a big adjustment you have to make is to learn to ask the right questions."

High vs. Low Power Distance

High power distance was seen as another fear-related factor negatively affecting Chinese citizens' openness and willingness to speak up. Several expatriates referred to Hofstede's notion of power distance and the fact Chinese culture reflects the high power

distance of Chinese society, which is in sharp contrast with the low power distance of American culture. One expatriate affirmed: “There’s a lot of power distance!”

Another respondent actually directly referred to Hofstede and stated:

. . . one of the timing characteristics of working with Chinese is that it’s a high-powered distance culture with . . . very high risk-aversion; meaning, that they don’t take chances . . . they are often afraid of making mistakes and afraid of getting chewed out [*sic*] for making those mistakes.

An expatriate who has lived in China for 13 years explained that high power distance has been partially results from the early conditioning of Chinese students:

If you’re Chinese, your first day in school you’re put into a classroom often with 50 or 60 students... And you have one teacher and perhaps an assistant.... the only way to control this situation is to shun the students very early. And because of this, often you find that people can be very thin skinned and susceptible to criticism all through their careers.... It stays with all Chinese who have gone through that experience, even if they come across as confident and brash and tough guys [*sic*]. You don’t have to do much to find that fear underneath.

Cheng Yu’s

One respondent brought light upon an integral aspect of Chinese communication, namely the notion of *cheng yu’s*. According to the respondent, *cheng yu’s* are four-syllable phrases that constantly remind Chinese citizens of their culture and history. The participant reported:

. . . even a poorly educated Chinese person knows a tremendous amount about their culture and history by virtue of these four-syllable phrases called *cheng*

yu's.... So their sense of their own history and wisdom and culture, it tends to be they're much more actively aware of it, I would say, than typical Westerners....

They may say something weird to you that for them totally makes sense . . .

He further commented:

. . . they may then stumble through some sort of a translation for you after that when they understand that you don't get it. But those things form the assumptions that they make about everything else. And so in that sense, you can find a more unified Chinese culture than you would certainly find in the U.S.

Study findings thus indicate that multiple communication challenges such as language barriers, wholistic patterns of reasoning, power distance discrepancies, fear of direct expression and fear of losing face, subtleties, varying questioning methodologies, tone of voice and cheng yu's contributed to the culture shock of informants and had a negative influence over their degree of general adjustment by leading to misunderstandings, confusion, frustrations and perceived loss of time. It is simply challenging for individuals used to free and direct expression to function in a culture shaped by cautious, subtle, indirect and contextual forms of communication.

Cultural Complexity, Societal Layers, and Guanxi Networks

The second most preeminent theme to emerge from this study is the impact that the perceived complexity of the Chinese socio-cultural environment is having on interviewed expatriates. Surprisingly, the words "complex," "layers" and "networks" appeared repeatedly throughout the interviewees.

Table 8

Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Cultural Complexity, Societal Layers and Guanxi Networks

Cultural Complexity, Societal Layers and Guanxi Networks	- Peeling Back Socio-cultural Layers - Penetrating & Building Guanxi Networks
--	--

Respondents explained that one of their main challenges has been to uncover the multiple layers and guanxi networks associated with the Chinese socio-cultural environment. Informants expressed the view that identifying, understanding and penetrating these complex socio-cultural components requires language fluency, time and extreme perseverance. It also requires the patient building of trust through on-going granting of favors to the right individuals.

It is extremely difficult for newcomers who lack time or language mastery to understand societal layers and access needed guanxi networks; this, according to study participants, directly contributes to the culture shock of many ABEs and negatively affects their adjustment through progressive frustration build up. One expatriate described Chinese culture as follows: “. . . very complex because what you see on the surface is definitely not reflective of what is on the inside . . . on the surface, everything seems very easy and very nice, and everyone is friendly, especially if you're talking about doing business.”

Without citing him, one participant employed Hofstede's cultural onion metaphor to describe the complexity of Chinese culture in getting one disoriented, and reported: “There's so many layers of culture here, and you can easily I think just understand that common analogy of you're peeling the layers of the onion and no matter how much you peel the onion, there are more layers.” A second expatriate concurred and stated: “. . . it's

extremely multi-layered.” A third interviewee explained: “... the issue of the culture is not easily described. It’s multi-layered and multi-faceted, and at times, extremely contradictory.... until a foreigner has been in China and involved in Chinese families and lawsuits and disputes.... It’s extremely multi-layered, multi-faceted and complex.”

Another respondent supported such views and stated:

So, a lot of contradictions I think. In general, I think there are many layers to Chinese culture. So, the longer you get here, you get to deeper levels and deeper understanding. And, I think you just realize that it almost gets, in some ways, more challenging the longer you’re here because you realize that maybe it isn’t as simple as when you first got here.

Peeling Back Socio-Cultural Layers

Several participants commented upon the need to “peel the layers” of Chinese society to gain greater understanding of Chinese culture, Chinese social stratification, and successfully adjust to the Chinese cultural environment. One expatriate commented:

I think there’s always going to be a level of uncomfortableness because . . . as a foreigner, you don’t understand how the system works here. You can understand pieces of the system, but you don’t understand how the government system works.

Another one further added: “My job involves meetings with the Chinese Government and sometimes . . . there’s [*sic*] a lot of layers there when you’re talking to somebody who works in such an important position.” A third respondent reported:

But I don’t think that you’re able to really move forward with any sort of business partnership unless you peel back the layers a little bit and understand what the

person that you're dealing with is really trying to accomplish. And that they're first extremely overly welcoming mood toward you might not actually be the way they feel about getting into bed with you . . . doing some real business with you.

A respondent who has lived in China for several years and married a Chinese national described the complexity of Chinese culture within his own family context:

It can be very challenging. And even in family, you may have a conversation with your family and really there's a whole deeper side that you're not getting to yet. And it's not as, if you compared it to being an American where everything is out on the table, we spill our guts [*sic*] the first time we meet somebody. It takes much longer with China.

Such examples further illustrate the cross-cultural challenges resulting from the differences existing between an apparently straightforward culture like the American culture which invites individuals to express themselves freely and directly, and a more complex society requiring on-going networking, constant contextual attention and navigation through multiple layers of power and socio-political connectivity. All expatriates, particularly new ones, are not properly equipped to properly function in such a complex cultural environment.

Penetrating & Building Guanxi Networks

When discussing the various layers and overall complexity of Chinese culture, respondents often referred to the notion of guanxi. One stated: "The way they do business is so much different. Guanxi networks and so forth." A participant who has lived in China for more than ten years described the prevalence of networks in Chinese culture:

. . . you have to be aware in China that there are networks that foreigners don't see. Sometimes, there are social networks among people whose families have known each other for a long time. Other times, there are government networks, but those are relatively transparent. And then finally, there are Communist Party networks. So somebody, because of their relationship within the party, will or will not do certain things

A fellow and culturally-acquainted respondent supported the view and declared:

. . . there are the social networks you see in front of you and the business networks. And then only a relatively small number of foreigners really know much about the Communist Party network. A lot of us know parts of it, but I don't really know how those guys work, and I don't know any people at senior levels. So this is a whole part of Chinese society that I know some of its objectives, I know some of its operational methods, but I don't really understand them.

Conflicting Time Orientations

The study uncovered significant findings with regards to time orientation. Although the short-term propensity of American culture and long-term orientation of Chinese culture have been established in the literature, two time-related factors were reported as contributing to the culture shock of informants and as having a negative impact upon their degree of general adjustment.

Table 9

Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Conflicting Time Orientations

Conflicting Time Orientations	- Speed and Pace of Transformation - Patience is a Virtue and a Must
-------------------------------	---

The first factor is the astonishing speed of transformation of Chinese society. A second factor is the uncanny patience needed to understand and function in Chinese society. Combined the two factors create great confusion among expatriates, most particularly new comers. As a consequence, participants reported greater family and professional schedule planning needs.

Speed and Pace of Transformation

Generally speaking, the relentless speed of transformation of Chinese society was perceived positively by study informants. Several reported their satisfaction in being part of a historical event. Nonetheless, that pace bears significant adjustment implications:

A newly-arrived expatriate commented upon the speed at which Chinese society is being transformed and described how that pace is affecting his general adjustment:

The pace of Shanghai at least is like nothing we've ever seen. It moves at a different rate.... I'm losing full weeks. I'm not remembering full weeks that came and went.... Everything happens so quickly. So that's been my initial perception of China.

The same participant added:

You can never anticipate just how fast China moves. And I think for me, that's been pretty much the shock. I knew it was a fast-moving country and that things

evolve very quickly here. Until you're here, you don't understand it. This place, unless you're in it, you can't really grasp it.

Patience Is a Virtue and a Must

One participant stressed that in Chinese culture patience is a virtue. Additionally, it is an attribute needed by expatriates to cope with a complex socio-cultural environment and uncover, one day at a time, the layers and networks composing that environment. A participant revealed: “. . . you really have to take a step by step approach. And the people who come over thinking well, I'm going to raise sales 30 percent and get a promotion and leave often don't do very well.”

The sharp contrast between traditional Confucian values which foster past and long-term time orientations, endurance, flexibility and patient development of trust, and the frenetic pace of transformation of Chinese society affect expatriates' adjustment and contribute to their culture shock through a sense of confusion, disorientation and time disequilibrium. On one hand, the patience needed to build trust and penetrate guanxi networks goes against the tight deadlines and time constraints faced by ABEs; on the other hand, they feel outpaced by China's relentless speed of transformation. The syndrome could be referred to as *patient hurriedness*.

Latent Chauvinism and Xenophobia

Another prevalent theme emerging from this exploratory inquiry pertains to the sense of latent chauvinism and xenophobia felt by study participants. Perceptions of xenophobic connotations were consistently commented upon and emphasized by informants.

Table 10

Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Latent Chauvinism and Xenophobia

Latent Chauvinism and Xenophobia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mistrust and Suspicion - Foreign Devils - Dancing Monkeys and Propaganda - Honored Guests; No More! - This Will Never Be Your Home
----------------------------------	--

Mistrust & Suspicion

A study participant who has lived in China for several years explained some of the reasons why Chinese citizens maintain a certain level of mistrust and suspicion toward foreigners. He reported the following:

China went through some terrible times in the 60s and 70s, with the Cultural Revolution. Where, if you said the wrong thing, your life could be destroyed fairly quickly; for the rest of your life. And, so many people either they were [sic] a part of that, or their parents were a part of that, so they are careful in how they relate, especially to strangers and... certainly with foreigners, based on those very real experiences that either they or their parents had. So, you need to understand a bit of that background as you work with Chinese employees.

Another participant shared the following comments: “. . . don't get into a relationship with a foreigner. Foreigners are courteous and moral; be courteous to them. Say 'hello' . . . that's the only thing you should say.”

Foreign Devils

One expatriate commented: “. . . they harbor these prejudicial views against foreigners that never really come out until you force them to the surface. And then you find out the basis of their prejudice, and it takes a long time to overcome that.” Another added: “They treat us, foreign devils [*sic*], sort of as demigods [*sic*] in a way because they think we're all rich, and that's everything to them; so, they sort of just leave us alone, and still defer to us.” A third informant added: “They don't believe in contracts. They believe they're foreigners, they steal, rob and bleed them [*sic*] – foreigners have money.”

A study participant who has lived in China for more than 10 years and married a Chinese citizen who gave him a child, commented at length about the deeply-held xenophobic feelings of a Chinese parent. He explained how his father-in-law, a businessman with whom he used to have very cordial relations became very agitated and totally antagonistic when the informant proposed to marry this individual's daughter. The answer was a categorically negative. The interviewee reported the following facts:

. . . when I was dating my wife. Her father was . . . a very, very nice guy. Really courteous, really just very open and nice to me right up until the point I wanted to marry his daughter. Then absolute chaos! ‘You're not marrying a foreigner! There's no way my daughter is marrying a foreigner! This can't be! I don't accept him as my son-in-law!’ We ended up getting married without her father's permission . . . He wouldn't accept me as part of the family.

He further added:

. . . this streak of prejudice just came out of this guy that was just quite amazing in trying to manipulate his daughter to leave me and end the relationship. . . And this

is a guy that I knew for a couple years who was always warm and nice to me. I finally learned that he was just being nice and courteous because that's the Chinese way, but as soon as something happens that jeopardize his core beliefs, which are be nice and courteous to people, but as soon as it's permanent or as soon as it interrupts their life, then the true feelings will come out.

Dancing Monkeys and Propaganda

Another expatriate explained how foreigners are at times invited to Chinese TV shows and are provided in advance answers asked of them during the show. The purpose of such forms of entertainment is to "...show that foreigners are interested in China and know about China." The respondent added:

People like me call it the *dancing monkey thing* [italics added] . . . but the government, the society here . . . sort of creates just stereotypes of what foreigners are and what foreigners think. The media does this a lot, too . . . there's so much preconception about what foreigners are and what we do, the Chinese people who are playing up to these preconceived concepts as well, but it's just [sic], everyone has these preconceptions that are groomed, that are maintained.

Another interviewee made additional comments about stereotypes attached to foreigners, and said:

The second thing is realize that to the Chinese, you're not very special. There must be a million Americans wondering around China doing one thing or another. Everybody who meets any foreigners in China has met Americans. And so, they've seen us before. They have their own ideas about what we're like. And the best thing you can do is not reinforce those ideas.

Honored Guests; No More

A related contributor to the culture shock of American business expatriates comes from the relative homogeneity of Chinese culture, a culture in which foreigners are welcomed guests but nothing more. Although China is a large and diverse country, several expatriates felt that the tightness of Chinese culture creates a bonding among Chinese citizens when it comes to interaction with foreigners. One expatriate commented:

So, there's a strong feeling of we are who we are, and everybody else is different from us. And they're often, when they start meeting foreigners, they're a little bit surprised that you can have a normal conversation and that I don't do anything that seems strange or upsetting to them.

Another added:

To Chinese people we're always guests . . . so they'll always be courteous to you, and they will always be, at least, not necessarily in Beijing, but most of China, people will generally be courteous to you . . . they will want to show you things based on their assumptions and stereotypes of what a foreigner would want.

This Will Never Be Your Home

A study participant, who has lived in China for nine years, loves China and has no intention of returning to the U.S. deplored the fact that in spite of all attempts made to acculturate to Chinese society, he will never be able to call China home. The interviewee made the following comments:

We would like to feel at home while we make . . . and live our lives here, just like anyone else wants to feel at home. And, that's the thing; they don't want us to

feel that we're home. We are guests. And, they want Chinese to think of foreigners as honored guests and not as someone who this is their home.

A fellow informant further deplored that regardless of how much fondness a foreigner may have for China he or she will never be able to become Chinese; he said:

I mean, you could speak perfect Chinese and have the customs down, even marry a Chinese and have children with that Chinese person. But you're never going to be Chinese. You can't even get Chinese citizenship. So there's never going to be a point that you're fully adjusted to being in China.

Moral and Ethical Flexibility

The notion of *moral and ethical flexibility* emerged as another critical study finding. The category constitutes an important aspect of this inquiry and encompasses a significant number of factors leading to the culture shock of participants and having a negative effect on their degree of general adjustment.

Table 11

Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Moral & Ethical Flexibility

Moral & Ethical Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Culture Based Upon Resource Providing - Get Rich As Fast As You Can; and at Any Cost - Face and Shame; Not Guilt! - Fakes, Imitations & IPR Infringements - Corruption & Lack of Public Ethics
-----------------------------	--

One expatriate explained:

They're very flexible people, too, they're not very law-abiding, but that gives them sort of flexibility. Nothing is really, as I've mentioned, nothing is really cut and dry . . . people are not into . . . putting a box around themselves, when they're in an organization, but they're not really into following the rules rigidly.

A second respondent illustrated the notion of moral and ethical flexibility by referring to the driving of Chinese citizens. He shared the following perception:

So that's a perplexing thing because there's – even though the government said, 'This is how you drive a car. You should do this. You should do that'. They don't, necessarily, follow all those rules. So, they have a sense of what's being enforced and what's not and what the government would really consider a harsh – would punish you harshly for, how it might be an embarrassment to the family sort of thing.

Moral and ethical flexibility was attributed to a broad array of factors encompassing Chinese culture's traditional emphasis on resource providing, the need to tap a thriving economy and get rich at any cost, cultural distinction between the notions of guilt and shame, lack of public ethics and the perception that Chinese citizens live in an "unsocialistic" or "godless society." The phenomenon was illustrated through examples of corruption, racket, IPR infringements, broken contracts, and selfish driving.

A Culture Based Upon Resource Providing

Some expatriates shared their perception that much of Chinese culture and interactions among individuals within that context tend to be based upon *resource providing*. For example, according to some participants, Chinese parents see children as

potential resource providers for old age. This is one of the reasons why Chinese parents and grandparents place so much emphasis upon education; a factor further reinforced by China's *One Child Policy*. Chinese children are expected to work extremely hard to go as high as possible within Chinese society and, one day, provide for their families and older parents. Similarly, Western employers are seen as resource providers; providers of knowledge, training, work, compensation, and advancement opportunities. This also explains why the Chinese government has heavily promoted joint-ventures between Chinese and international firms. These firms are seen as providers of know-how, technology, ideas, organizational processes and capital.

One of the study participants declared:

Well, this whole business of relationships; this is an important thing about Chinese culture. All relationships in China are based on resources. What can you bring them? And that makes sense in a business context, and it makes sense in a political context. But marriages are based on resources. The husband is expected to provide a house and a car on the wedding day. The religious practice is based on resources. I go to church, so God will take care of me. Children are big resources . . . they're supposed to take care of you [on your old age].

Another interviewee who has lived in China for an extensive period of time shared a similar view and saw the Chinese approach to marriage as a perfect illustration of a culture based upon resource providing. According to the informant, Chinese parents think: “. . . this is a good person because he's a good provider. This is a good person because his family has this and that.”

Get Rich as Fast as You Can; and at Any Cost

The perceived moral flexibility and lack of ethics perceived in Chinese culture was further supported by numerous comments about the frustrations resulting from the feeling of being lied to or cheated. This constitutes another significant study finding.

A respondent who has lived in China for an extensive period of time had strong feelings in describing observations made about Chinese culture. He declared:

They cheat and they lie [*sic*], and they do things that we would never consider doing in North America or Europe, probably because you wouldn't like going to jail. Here, no! If that man we know is a government bureaucrat, we know how he got his money. He steals [*sic*] it directly, okay? And if he's a boss of a company that makes shoes, he stole all the designs and he cheats his labor. Everybody knows that. And then, when he drives a beautiful car by, everybody, including the people he cheats, think he's great because he has money. No one cares how you make your money here, even if he steals it from your bank account.

Another participant shared similar feelings and highlighted a paradox found in the Chinese cultural environment. He described an almost bi-polar association between the apparent friendliness of Chinese citizens and their unscrupulousness or moral flexibility when it comes to doing business:

. . . it's just a very curious twist to their culture that they can be so loving and so friendly and so nice in the family, but when it comes to outsiders and when it comes to making money, they can have a completely different view on things.

A third expatriate affirmed that a different value system requires Chinese heads of family to do whatever possible to provide for their families. Getting rich fits such

a value system; most particularly in these times of rapid economic expansion as enrichment opportunities abound.

Face and Shame; Not Guilt

Several study participants commented upon the fact that unlike Judeo-Christian civilization which thinks in terms of *sin* or *guilt*, Chinese society thinks in terms of face (*mien*) and shame (*chih*). Although this contradiction has been extensively described in the literature, obtaining confirmation from interviewees constitutes an important revelation from the study as the dichotomy bears several implications. A quote from one of the interviewed expatriates highlights one of these implications: “they don’t talk about guilt, they talk about shame. It’s in their language. So, they don’t have a lot of guilt when they do bad things. They have shame when they’re discovered [*sic*].” This is a crucial finding as it underlies many of the tensions (e.g., failed joint-ventures) associated with Sino-American relations, fuels many of the frustrations associated with the culture shock of expatriates, and hinders their prompt and effective general adjustment.

A second expatriate presented the notion as *embarrassment over punishment*. He stated: “. . . those are all considerations in the Chinese mind. – I would say embarrassment to the family over any kind of personal punishment that someone gets is a bigger deal than the punishment itself.”

Fakes, Imitations & IPR Infringements

Constant exposure to fake products, imitations and infringements on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) also contributed to the culture shock and maladjustment of interviewed expatriates. These dimensions were commented upon extensively. One participant declared:

If you trust, then, you're in trouble! [*sic*] I could show you any number of Crest toothpastes in any store here in Guangzhou, and at any varying price, okay? And I always joke; when I go in, I think: 'Should I buy the real Crest, the real fake Crest, or the fake real Crest?' And they all say Crest on it. If that happened in Portland, what would happen? The police would be down there, right? But they just put Crest right on it.

Another one described a situation where he paid for what was supposed to be a brand new computer of the latest generation but received an obsolete one instead.

However, based upon informant input, there seem to exist tensions within Chinese society between individuals willing to make money at any cost and those concerned about the image of China in the world. He explained: "Some of my best friends are Chinese . . . they are pretty much appalled by the whole Chinese approach to business, which is steal, copy, lie, and cheat [*sic*]."

Corruption & Lack of Public Ethics

Corruption was also reported as a factor leading to culture shock and having a negative influence of general adjustment. One interviewed expatriate commented:

Now, the corruption levels vary by region in China, and in other parts of China, they're a lot worse, so you have got to understand that issue wherever you are in China, and you've got to find ways to deal with it, balancing your business needs, your parent company's code of ethics, and figuring out what's the right solution. And, we could go on and on about that.

Another respondent supported that view and said:

I have to spend a lot of time visiting clients, taking them out, saying nice things to them; sometimes buying gifts. Not for corruption, but spending more money on gifts than I would in the states where I probably would never give a gift.

A well-experienced participant indicated:

There is a curious thing about the Chinese here in Shanghai... when they . . . hear a story about a successful business man who got successful because he cheated his way to the top , or may have broken laws. While they know that that's wrong, they greatly admire the guy for becoming famous and rich. They expect that if you are a high-powered businessman, you are engaged in that behavior or you would not be a high-powered businessman guy [*sic*].

Several participants attributed this moral flexibility to the *lack of ethics* and most particularly *lack of public ethics* found in Chinese society. One interviewee declared: "And that's another aspect of it, there is no ethics. There's no ethics here." The lack of public ethics was further highlighted by the following quote: "I'm constantly reminded of the civil society or the lack of people who understand public ethics."

An informant highlighted the consequences that exposure to corruption and ethical trappings can have on expatriates. He declared: ". . . you've got [*sic*] to find ways to deal with it [corruption]; balancing your business needs, your parent company code of ethics, and figuring out what's the right solution."

Government and Bureaucratic Interference

Several participants commented upon the effects that Chinese government and heavy bureaucratic interference can have upon their general adjustment.

Table 12

Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Government & Bureaucratic Interference

Government & Bureaucratic Interference	-	Tight control
	-	Paperwork

One expatriate commented:

. . . the government's driving it all. So if the government says that it's okay, then it gets done. But you have to wait for the government to say that . . . But when the government decides to move . . . it moves. It doesn't move a lot. But when it decides to move, it moves very quickly. So that also, sort of, keeps you on your toes [*sic*] about a lot of things.

One participant referred to the amount of paperwork associated with living in a highly bureaucratic environment: "It's all the paperwork that you have to do." The same participant added:

So the Chinese have rules that are inconsistent or make it hard just to live, basically, here. Then you have the visa situation, etc. So living out on the Chinese open market, in general, is a lot more difficult just because of the rules and regulations. Not being fluent in the language makes it also more difficult dealing with those issues.

Negative Socio-cultural, Economic Infrastructure and Environmental Conditions

Other factors associated with Chinese culture, society, economic infrastructure (i.e., banks, hospitals) and environment were found to have a negative influence over the general adjustment of interviewed ABEs.

Table 13

Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of General Adjustment - Negative Socio-cultural, Economic Infrastructure & Environmental Conditions

Negative Socio-cultural, Economic Infrastructure and Environmental Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crowds and Lack of Personal Space - Traffic & Chinese Driving - Food - Pollution - Lagging Economic Infrastructure - Regional differences - Lack of Reliability
---	---

Crowds and Lack of Personal Space

Exposure to huge Chinese crowds represents one of the negative factors reported as a culture shock contributor and as having a negative impact on general adjustment.

One expatriate who has lived in China for more than ten years described some of the feelings felt while being immersed in Chinese crowds:

...you have a lot of closer contact, a lot of people bumping into you and so forth, and it seemed like they were rude. They didn't say anything. They just bumped into you. But it's part of their culture, being very crowded in a close contact area. And I guess if you said, 'Sorry' every time you bumped into somebody, you wouldn't be able to make forward progress in your day. So that was one issue. I thought, 'Okay; they're kinda rude' [sic] but I got over that.

Another interviewee commented: "If you compare to America, then it's crowded; personal space is very different. People staring at you all the time; different levels of sanitation; different standards." Another respondent commented at length about the fact that in Chinese citizens are so used to living in crowds, that they have developed some type of disregard for others. Referring to individual behavior within Chinese crowds, he

declared: Here it's just every man for himself!" He further added: "... if you can get in front of somebody else, then, that's okay. You're smarter than they are."

A fellow expatriate commented upon the lack of personal space and some of the consequences associate with that aspect of Chinese society. He commented: You know, the lack of personal space, even to the point where ... in a crowded elevator ... somebody will burp very loudly ..."

Traffic & Chinese Driving

Two additional but related components of the Chinese cultural environment perceived as negative contributors to the degree of general adjustment of informants were traffic and driving. Surprisingly, a majority of respondents referred to the huge traffic congestions found in Chinese cities and the perilous driving of Chinese drivers. A participant stated: "I couldn't stand living there because of the traffic and the noise ..."

A newly-arrived expatriate reported: "... the driving around here is probably the hardest thing to adjust to because it's frightening." A third informant described his culture shock as follows: "... the way they think is hard to understand. For instance, a driver driving on a sidewalk full of people, and expecting the people to get out of the way because he's bigger than they are." A fourth respondent who was hit by a taxi driver declared: "... they drive like crazy people ... they sort of expect you to scatter out of the way ..."

A fifth informant supported the views and said: "... for Chinese people traffic rules are just guidelines ... if they're in a car, they have a privilege that you don't as a pedestrian."

Food

Comments about Chinese food varied; while some expatriates indicated that they appreciate Chinese food, others saw food as a negative contributor to their general

adjustment. They made comments such as “The food took some getting used to . . .” and “Sometimes people have a really adverse reaction to the food there. It’s not the same as the food we get in most Chinese restaurants in the U.S.; it’s very different.”

In addition, finding cold beverages like the ones American enjoy drinking around the year is often challenging in China; expatriates are often forced to drink hot beverages, which also contributes to their culture shock. One commented: “For example, drinking hot water, that’s rooted in Chinese medicine. It’s over 5,000 years old and they only drink hot water. You can’t get ice water here because they think it’s bad for you . . .”

Pollution

A few respondents mentioned bad weather and pollution as Chinese environmental factors contributing to general adjustment challenges. One expatriate stated: “Air pollution and traffic are every expats main concerns of living here. . . that’s for sure!” A second expatriate recently arrived to China from Europe lamented: “You get over here, and you have pollution. It is 100 degrees with 95 percent humidity.” A participant who has lived in China for a lengthy period of time also shared concerns about the impact that pollution can have on the health of his children. He deplored:

I’m a father, I have two kids. And I know that it’s good for my career to be over here, but as far as they’re – I’m not seeing and thinking through their development and then how living in China may have an effect on them not long physically but health and the pollution and other issues over here...

Lagging Economic Infrastructure

The poor quality the Chinese infrastructure (i.e., crowded hospitals, poor banking services, etc.), the perceived shortage of commodities, and the lack of reliability of day-

to-day appliances, also emerged as Chinese environmental factors contributing to the frustrations and culture shock of informants, and having a negative influence over their degree of general adjustment. A respondent who has lived in China for quite some time brought additional light to the reality of Chinese living conditions, He alluded to the fact that in spite of the country's unprecedented economic progress, China primarily remains a rural society with significant infrastructure discrepancies. He declared:

When you get here, you hear about all these great things. The Chinese have so much money . . . But at the heart of it, the Chinese are still very, very *backward country* [*sic*] [italics added], what I would call very, very peasant like [*sic*].

Other respondents commented upon the frustrations felt when dealing with Chinese banks. One expatriate stated: "Getting a bank account is not as easy as in the United States." Another expatriate contrasted some of the economic and infrastructure improvements obtained by China in recent years to the backwardness of the Chinese banking system. He described the following: "Before, it was almost everything that was difficult or it was a difficult adjustment, but now, the adjustment is really banking . . . that's the one thing that hasn't changed." A fellow expatriate expressed concerns about the scarcity of credit cards and the prevalence of cash transactions in mainland China. He reported the following:

There are cash limits about how much foreign cash – \$50,000 – that you can bring in a year . . . it sounds like a lot of money. But when you realize that everything here is paid in cash, it's not that much money . . . all of our utilities, the apartment rental is all in cash. Not unlike the United States in some respects, but credit cards just aren't as prevalent here.... It's all in cash!

Another informant described at length the negative impressions that crowded Chinese hospitals with limited infrastructure and patient-management capabilities had on her as an American expatriate. She declared: “. . . having strange people that I don't know crowding into the examination room because they're desperate to get to the front of the line to be the next person to see the doctor was really aggravating to me.”

Regional Differences

Some expatriates further stressed the fact that adaptation to the Chinese cultural environment can be affected by regional differences in levels of infrastructure. One declared: “. . . there exist regional nuances which make people different depending on where they are from.” Another expatriate confirmed that point and said: “So that life there, to me, has been extremely positive experience. Although, living in a second or third-tiered city in China might be something altogether different.”

Lack of Reliability

A newly-arrived expatriate described at length how Chinese emphasis on rapid growth at any cost negatively impacted his experience and his family's. He reported:

There's a lack of reliability . . . in our house, one or two light bulbs burn out every single day. And this house is new. . . they're shoddy; they're locally made light bulbs that literally burn out for no reason. And then the hot water heater goes down every fourth day, and there's no reliability . . . especially for Americans who . . . are about durability and sustainability.

Another expatriate described how the lack of reliability negatively affected his experience as well as his son's health:

In every single apartment I've been in, I've had a plumbing disaster or a fuse box catch on fire. Or lead paint in the walls . . . I would have to call up the landlord and negotiate, and sometimes negotiations failed. I had to move out of a place . . . that had lead paint and whoever refused to deal with it. And, my son had elevated levels of lead in his blood.

Chinese Cultural Factors Having a Negative Influence on the Degree of Work Adjustment

This exploratory study also uncovered several Chinese cultural factors contributing to the cultural shock of ABEs in their professional environment, and having a negative influence over their degree of work adjustment. These factors contributed to stress, brought managerial and personal frustrations and had detrimental effects on work performance, effectiveness and relationships. Although some of them (e.g.; management challenges, difficult business culture, etc.) directly pertain to the work environment, others (i.e., communication challenges, government omnipresence) parallel the Chinese cultural factors having a negative influence over the degree of general adjustment.

A respondent illustrated quite effectively the evolution of the Chinese business context and some of the implications that this evolution had upon work interaction between expatriates and Chinese workers and business partners. He reported:

When I was here in the '80s as a student, it really wasn't very much fun at all. . . . It was in many ways a repressive environment. When I returned in the mid '90s . . . it was easier to live here, but it was still hard to do business because the

attitudes were based on socialistic economic planning and didn't really relate . . . to Western management. To be specific, factory managers who usually had been state-owned employees; their goal was to increase assets, and they didn't really care about cash or cash flow. And Western industries take the opposite view.... And after the APEC conference in Shanghai in 2001, the atmosphere in Shanghai really changed and things felt quite different.

Management Challenges

The inquiry uncovered a broad array of Chinese cultural factors having a negative influence upon the managerial aspects of work adjustment. Such factors emerged as the root causes of many expatriate frustrations, which led to culture shock as well. A respondent made direct allusions to the culture shock implications resulting from managing Chinese employees. He reported:

I think expatriates come here and they expect that the team that they put in place is going to work extremely hard as a team to accomplish a common goal; and they come here and they realize that that's not exactly the situation. You have to manage your team much more in depth than you would in the U.S.

A fellow expatriate, with years of experience living and working in China, explained that he actually has four distinct management styles to deal with a broad spectrum of Chinese employees. He revealed: "I have four different managing styles, and I have to change when the person comes in. I just have to!"

Following is a summary of managerial challenges that emerged from the study.

Table 14

Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of Work Adjustment – Management Challenges

Management Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication Challenges - Different Thinking: A Mind Game - Fear of Losing Face & Fear of Authority: They Can't Say 'No' - Don't Assume! Give Clear Directions and Verify - Different Work Ethics & Bureaucratic Mindset - Perceived Lack of Creativity, Imagination, Independent Thinking or Initiative - Strong Group Orientation
-----------------------	--

Communication Challenges

A cultural challenge to expatriates in their work environment comes from the fact that professional and technical competencies among Chinese workers do not necessarily parallel English-speaking ones. A few respondents emphasized the need to distinguish between language abilities and intellect, skills and competencies. In their view, for the sake of convenience, too many expatriates take short cuts and tend to hire or collaborate with Chinese individuals who can speak English at the expense of more competent ones who lack English-speaking fluency. One informant reported: “. . . many expatriates will trust the people who speak the best English. And, that's often a big problem. You'll have your employees who speak good English, but that doesn't mean they're good at other things.” According to respondents, expatriates, and most particularly those who do not master Mandarin, often tend to value English fluency over more important skills; this can have negative consequences over performance, and thus negatively affect the degree of work adjustment.

Informant further highlighted the importance of working with translators to communicate with competent Chinese workers and partners. A respondent stated: “. . . you’ve got to really work with the translator that you’re using.”

Different Thinking: A Mind Game

Consistent with some of the findings related to the degree of general adjustment, differences in patterns of reasoning were reported as contributing to culture shock and having a negative effect over the degree of work adjustment. Informants commented at length about such factors; their input seems to indicate that the notions of trust, caution, patience and wholistic thinking are constantly at play in Chinese patterns of reasoning.

An informant clearly explained how Chinese and American employees use different approaches and patterns of thinking to solve work-related challenges and stated:

They just didn’t, necessarily, approach the problem as we would in the West, and I think that’s just a general commentary about the Chinese in general. I think that we have the same goals in mind, both of our countries, both of our people. You wanna have a happy life, etc. [*sic*], feed your family, take care of things. But we don’t approach problems the same way.

A second respondent emphasized the need for fellow expatriates to make genuine efforts to understand Chinese employees, collaborators and partners, and enhance communication with such individuals. He stated:

So, really understanding what they’re thinking and how to communicate with them most effectively. Sometimes it just seems completely mysterious. So, every single day you’re filled with triumphs and then you get knocked back down but then you just have to continue to persevere and try to understand more.

A third individual agreed and stressed the importance for expatriates to understand local mindsets and motivations. He declared: “Well, I think any time you’re doing business in China you need to have an understanding of the local mindset and where people are coming from and where their motivations are.” A fourth participant further agreed and referred to this phenomenon as a “mind game.”

A fellow respondent further explained how, in contradiction with the fast decision-making dimension of American business culture, Chinese business circles are slow-moving and must feel first “comfortable” before engaging in a business transaction. He reported: “The Chinese react in a different way by saying that they have to be comfortable with the deal . . . before they actually do the deal. Things just don’t move as quickly as they move in other places.”

Fear of Losing Face and Fear of Authority: They Can’t Say ‘No’

Informants made countless comments about Chinese employees’ inability to say ‘no’ to managerial requests, even when unable to perform related tasks. This theme too emerged as a key study finding. According to study participants, by fear of losing face in front of managers and co-workers, Chinese employees seem unable to tell management that they simply cannot accomplish a given task.

One interviewee reported:

I’ll tell you one thing that is a frustration, and that I think probably hits home as a cultural norm, is Chinese people don’t want to say ‘no’ The initial response that a lot of people will have here is that yes, it can be done, when in reality it can’t be done. And so it goes back to that reliability thing a little bit, I find . . .

they say, 'Hey, yes, yes, yes' [*sic*] and at the last minute, it turns out it can't be done. That provides a lot of frustration and a lack of trust . . . with Westerners.

The same participant further commented that constantly hearing 'yes' from individuals who are not necessarily equipped to solve a business problem or perform a task can have negative effects on trust; an essential ingredient of effective organizational behavior. He added: ". . . honestly, I do see that it becomes a trust issue because you begin to not believe what everybody says. So I think that, culturally, that's the only thing that I probably haven't hit on that could be a frustration." Another executive clearly described the challenges faced by expatriates attempting to improve communication with Chinese employees by understanding their thinking. He emphasized the need for patience and relationships, and explained:

They were trying to figure out what they thought I wanted to hear. And, what they thought would be safe to say. I think I established a reputation over many years, I really wanted to know what people actually were thinking, whether it was good or bad. But, to get people to open up in China if you're a foreigner, just takes time. You have to build relationships and you don't do that in one meeting.

This example alone clearly illustrates Chinese employees' propensity to tell expatriate managers what they think they want to hear in order to be safe, as well as the resulting management implications of such a phenomenon.

The high power distance and respect for authority resulting from Confucian tradition tend to further reinforce the phenomenon through fear of hierarchy. This emerged as a direct challenge to ABEs who are used to communicate frankly and openly,

and expect reciprocity from employees, co-workers and business partners. Many reported frustrations at their incapacity to obtain the frank answers and directness they expect.

Another expatriate transposed the consequences of a high power distance culture over management styles: “Work interaction and some challenges would be in the management styles, which are a little bit different . . . kind of . . . top down management; you wouldn’t do anything until you were told to do it.”

Don’t Assume! Give Clear Directions and Verify

Several respondents shared similar frustrations about the general tendency among Chinese employees to tell managers what they think management wants to hear. They strongly emphasized the need to give Chinese employees clear instructions, and follow up frequently to ensure that such directions are well understood and implemented. They also warned about the risks associated with making erroneous assumptions. One expatriate reported: “At work, you have to make sure you give clear instructions; do not assume anything, because when you assume something, you’ll get in trouble.” Another respondent assented and said:

. . . at work . . . it’s a challenge anywhere in the world to find out what the lower level people are really thinking; bad news never goes up, it only stays down at the lower levels, that’s true in the U.S., but it’s far more true here... in China.

A fellow expatriate supported that view and explained:

The 37, 38-year-old will say, ‘yes, okay’, just shake his head and walk out. And if he didn’t agree, he won’t tell you. If he has a better idea, he won’t tell you.

He’ll just do it his way; and after he walks out.

A second respondent concurred and warned fellow expatriates about the risk of letting one's guard down. This individual explained, that by fear of losing face, Chinese employees will never refuse a given task or assignment, whether competent to accomplish it or not. This has strong managerial implications in terms of creating a need for constant control and verification. The expatriate explained:

You can't get used to it [the fact that Chinese employees can't say no]. You have to just be conscious of it all the time. Because as soon as you say that you're getting used to it, that's when you close your mind and you say now I understand what's going on and that's when you're gonna run into serious trouble.

Another participant supported such views and stressed the need for clear goals, timelines and constant verifications when interacting with Chinese employees. He said:

It is a much slower process. One must define roles and objectives more precisely and details need to be checked. One must also always have a timeline and mini goals or milestones to ensure that you get what you want when you need it.

Another expatriate further confirmed that point and restated the need for clear directions. She said: "You have to be specific and direct, like as in give the solution and suggest somebody execute it rather than leaving it open ended and free thinking and creative. A lot of people don't really operate that way here."

An interviewee invited fellow expatriates to lower their expectations when doing business in China, and affirmed: "I think, overall, you have to slow down your expectations of anything . . . business doesn't happen as fast as it does anywhere else."

Different Work Ethics & Bureaucratic Mindset

Cultural differences also emerged in the study with regards to work ethics. Such differences constituted negative factors leading to the culture shock of informants in their work environment. Several participants reported that although Chinese workers have demonstrated a proven work capacity, they are challenged in terms of work attitude, beliefs and expectations, as well as a lack of imagination, creativity or independent thinking. Moreover, fear constantly prevents initiative and quick decision-making.

Different work habits.

One expatriate explained the following: “I think that the biggest frustration levels for executive, expatriates is the culture here, the work culture which says, like I said before, you gave me a job description and that’s my job description; and that’s what I’m gonna do.”

An expatriate working for a MNC highlighted the contrast between the fact that once given proper directions Chinese employees can work extremely hard, and the fact that they cannot take initiative. He also reported a perception that all efforts are very individual, a trend that requires particular management attention. He stated:

. . . as a Westerner, you’re wanting people to come to you with new ideas, and you’re wanting them to say, ‘Hey, why am I doing this the way it is and can I be doing it better?’ And that is a very hard thing for a lot of the local people to do. Once you get them pointed in the right direction, they’re animals and they go after it and they’re incredibly hard workers. But . . . coming with a new strategy or way of thinking, that’s difficult for them to do. And I’m obviously generalizing

here. But those are kind of some of the impressions I've had so far, of the work environment.

A fellow expatriate who has worked extensively both in Japan and China contrasted the work habits of the two environments. He reported that unlike Japanese workers who are willing to work long hours both during and after working hours. Chinese workers are primarily interested in doing their work during stated work hours.

One more respondent confirmed such assertions and highlighted to different time tables and works schedules used in China compared to the West. He explained:

Last thing is leave yourself lots and lots of time. The time table and the work schedules that we maintain in the States or even in Europe these days, Chinese aren't going to keep to them. They can't. They're often leaving the office at 5:00 or 6:00 regardless of the work that's been done. And their attitude is the schedule gets pushed back anyway. So you find strategies to keep people on the schedule, but basically, you have to allow yourself, depending on the project, anywhere from 30 percent to 300 percent more time to get the work done right.

A study participant who also confirmed the general routine work orientation and bureaucratic mindset of Chinese employees attempted to explain the historical reasons behind such an orientation. He essentially explained that there was a time in Chinese history when staying too long at work meant that there was no food left in the stores. Moreover, although commodity stores start appearing throughout China, they are not as prevalent as they are in the U.S. Other study participants reinforced expatriates' perception about the bureaucratic mindset of their Chinese employees. One reported: "So, he doesn't wanna let go of that because he's always done it that way." She further added:

And as a result, there's a lot of emphasis on form over function and procedure as opposed to actually figuring out if that's necessary or worth it. It's just if you ask a question, the answer will be no. And then, you ask why and they'll say, 'Well, we've never done it that way before'.

One expatriate who had not been paid for a month and a half after arrival exemplified the bureaucratic mindset of Chinese employees in her corporation; she reported that when investigating with the HR department of a major MNC why her name did not appear on the payroll software application she was told: "Your name is too long."

A Perceived Lack of Creativity, Imagination, Independent Thinking or Initiative

A recurrent theme among interview responses was the perceived lack of creativity, imagination, independent thinking and initiative of Chinese workers. This theme came over and over and represents one of the greatest revelations of this exploratory study with regards to factors negatively affecting the degree of work adjustment. A related discovery comes from the fact that several participants attributed such characteristics to the Chinese educational system itself. An informant reported:

I think from work ethic perspective, Chinese work very hard, but they're not independent thinkers. It's changing a little bit, but when you hire someone in China to do a job and you give them a job description, they'll do exactly that and no more, and they don't use their imagination and say to themselves: 'Okay, what do I need to do to perform better?'

A second expatriate commented upon the misperception that most Americans have about Chinese students' intellectual achievement compared to the reality found by companies employing Chinese schools' graduates.

A third interviewee concurred and affirmed: “The Chinese student has basically just memorized everything . . . They can’t think outside the box.”

A fellow respondent further supported the view and affirmed:

If you don’t give a specific direction you can’t really expect anybody to go outside the box or outside of their job description to do something. Specifically ask for what you want instead of hinting around because it won’t be done.

One participant stated: “It’s definitely different from the way we manage in the West where you would assign a project and say come back to me in a week and show me what you’ve figured out.”

Strong Group Orientation

Informants commented upon the consequences that the strong group orientation of Chinese culture bears upon management methodologies; most particularly when it comes to employee praise and rewards.

No “shining stars”.

One participant reported:

I would say everyone wants to hold to the same level of progress, which can be a challenge. Nobody wants to be a shining star. It’s not really looked on well to be an overachiever in a group in an office environment.

A fellow executive confirmed the importance for individuals not to take personal credit on work initiatives and to always credit one’s co-workers instead. He declared:

One is also very careful not to take credit for something here. So I’m about to create an important business deal for my company. And instead, I’m going to talk about the importance of a team effort and how we work together. And if I did

anything other than that, people would stop working with me or make it more difficult to cooperate.

Do not criticize your employees.

One respondent stipulated that unlike practices commonly found among American management practices, managing Chinese employees precludes the use of criticism. He posited: “. . . in an American firm, you would properly reprimand the employee if they got it wrong. . . . But in China . . . make sure to never post a criticism.”

A Difficult Business Culture

Several respondents commented at length about the effects that different business norms, practices, values and attitudes among Chinese business circles had on their culture shock. Many emphasized that the notion of guilt that can, at times, influence Western business culture does not seem to exist in Chinese business dealings. From a Western perspective, the perceived general lack of moral and ethical consideration in Chinese business dealings appears to have greatly contributed to the culture shock of interviewed American business expatriates and negatively affected their degree of work adjustment.

Table 15

Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants' Degree of Work Adjustment – A Difficult Business Culture

A Difficult Business Culture

- A Different Set of Moral and Commercial Values
 - Contract Enforcement Challenges
 - Economic Rivalry
 - Government Interference
-

One executive characterized the Chinese business culture as “appalling.” He stated: “But the culture with regard to business and the culture with regard to enforcing contracts and the culture with regard to making money, it sometimes is a little bit appalling [*sic*].”

Another experienced expatriate who has also worked in China for extended time concurred and explained the emphasis placed in the Chinese business environment to obtain wealth at any cost:

If there’s a curious thing about the Chinese, at least here in Shanghai, is that when they read a story about . . . a successful business man who got successful because he may have cheated his way to the top, or he may have broken laws. While they know that that’s wrong, they greatly admire the guy for becoming famous and rich. So it’s not like in the West where when we hear about someone who got ahead because he cheated the system or he screwed over his business partners, and we think, ‘Oh my gosh, how horrible!’ Here, they admire that because they expect that if you’re a high-powered businessman; you’re engaged in that behavior or you wouldn’t be a high-powered businessman.

One interviewee assented and summed up his perception as follows: “My job was to go to business meetings and be lied to [*sic*].”

A Different Set of Moral and Commercial Values

One of the interviewees expressed strong feelings about his perceived callousness of Chinese business culture. He declared:

This business climate is based on what they call copying. They steal. They directly steal [*sic*]. They steal software, they steal designs, they will send their

people to trade shows and conferences with fake nametags.... They take pictures, and then, they'll ask for samples based on false pretenses . . . they take them back . . . directly copy them . . . they don't make any attempts to improve on them.

Then, they play a race to the bottom game, all based on pricing.

Another respondent shared that view and commented:

There're almost no moral values here [*sic*] with regard to . . . how you treat people in business deals. There's [*sic*] really no moral values involved with regard to how you make money. I think that Chinese people can be a little bit callous with regard to their ethics and business dealings.

A fellow expatriate further highlighted the apparent lack of remorse found in the general Chinese business environment and pointed out that Shanghainese business people are known to have little remorse in winning at any cost. He reported: "Shanghainese people are really known to be the most savvy business people in China, and they have no remorse just screwing you over [*sic*], basically, to get ahead financially."

Contract Enforcement Challenges

Several informants commented upon the difficulties associated with either creating or enforcing contracts between their organizations and Chinese business individuals or entities. One informant commented:

. . . a lot of places in Asia still prefer to operate on a handshake agreement or keep things general and light and easy in contracts. Then, in other places sometimes in China, you'll have an agreement and people do whatever they wanna do anyway.

Another respondent made comments about the large amount of failed joint-ventures between American and Chinese firms. He described how Chinese partners can

with total impunity suddenly breach or terminate contracts with foreign partners once they acquired the needed knowledge, technology and/or resources brought by that partner in a joint-venture. The informant declared: “The contract means nothing to them and no Chinese court is gonna back it up because the government doesn’t care. They got what they wanted.”

Another well-experienced expatriate who has lived in China for several years and has had business dealings at the highest levels of trade and decision-making confirmed the validity of such a scenario and declared:

I’ve met many expats in China who have this rosy view on Chinese people and trustworthiness of Chinese people and their partners, and frankly, I think that they’re just naïve, and they don’t really understand what’s going on behind the scenes, and they’ve never really been involved in a dispute to see how the system works, and how it specifically works against expats and foreigners and foreign companies and how everything is stacked against us. And it’s very deep rooted. It’s not just on the surface level at courts or politics. It’s really a deeper, deeper issue with regard to it’s okay to screw over a foreigner because he’s a foreigner.

Economic Rivalry

Issues of economic rivalry emerged from comments made by interviewees apart from specific interview questions as participants discussed the reality of their expatriate life. Several individuals declared being aware of China’s economic ambitions and commented freely upon their perceptions of Chinese and American economic realities. A first respondent declared: “. . . I think . . . that the Chinese are looking to be equals on the international stage. So it’s generally lack in trust of foreigners.” Economic rivalry-

related issues contribute to culture shock and negatively affect the degree of work adjustment by eroding the level of mutual trust needed to perform effectively in a cross-cultural environment. Participants gave several examples of trust erosion.

An informant referred to a Chinese proverb and declared:

. . . from a Chinese perspective, remember this always, *there can only be one emperor* [italics added]. So, so much for your joint technology! . . . what will generally happen? You bring the technology in there from Seattle or Portland, okay? They will joint venture with you and learn everything they possibly can to you, and steal the technology, while you're getting the market going . . .

Government Interference

Study participants also made comments about the strong involvement of the Chinese government in business transactions. Both policy (i.e., business and economic control, interest and exchange rates) and bureaucratic (i.e., paperwork, red tape, access to decision-makers, etc.) aspects of government intervention can have a negative aspect on ABEs and their degree of work adjustment. One expatriate commented:

But the one thing that surprises all newcomers to China is the degree of government involvement in business, not just the economy in terms of setting interest rates and all that. But actually, the ways that one can do business and how much the government affects what you can do and how you can do it.

Chinese Cultural Factors Having a Negative Influence on the Degree of

Interactive Adjustment

Several expatriates commented upon the fact that they knew the importance of staying away from international compounds to build relationships with host nationals, and maximize their chances to quickly adjust to the new environment. One commented:

. . . we made a concerted effort to not stay in the embassy bubble and get out and meet people . . . being out and about and being involved in different things and having a wider circle of friends. . . . We knew it would be important to have a network of friends outside the embassy.

Nevertheless, several respondents commented upon the inherent complexity of establishing fruitful relationships with Chinese citizens due to several factors. The inquiry uncovered a series of Chinese cultural factors contributing to the culture shock of informants and had negative effects upon their degree of interactive or relational adjustment. Such factors contributed to feelings of cultural isolation and adversely affected the building of meaningful relationships with Chinese nationals.

Communication Challenges

Communication challenges were reported as having a negative effect upon interactive adjustment, as they were with both general and work degrees of adjustment.

Table 16

Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants’ Degree of Host Interaction Adjustment – Communication Challenges

Factors	Sub-factors
Communication Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language and Language Barriers - Difficult Conversations - Social Awkwardness

Language and Language Barriers

A first challenge reported by study respondents with regards to interaction with Chinese nationals pertains to obvious language barriers; particularly for expatriates who are not sufficiently fluent in Mandarin. A newly-arrived expatriate manager deplored:

. . . the social interaction is just so limited because the language barrier is huge. It's absolutely huge. I mean so many people don't speak English and we're nowhere when it comes to Mandarin right now. . . . But the language barrier makes it tough to even interact.

Another informant stressed how reliance upon English-speaking nationals can greatly reduce opportunities to interact with Chinese nationals.

Difficult Conversations

Beyond the communication struggles resulting from various degrees of language fluency, some study participants commented upon the difficulty to understand culturally-different thought patterns. One participant observed:

So, the challenge in Asia and in China, in your interaction with people, is to really understand what they really mean, because here, a 'yes' does mean 'yes'. A 'yes' means I'm listening to you, and it's required that I say 'yes', but what they're really thinking, maybe something entirely different. So, you need to understand that dynamic, and you just have to spend more time working with people, talking with people, to understand what they're really thinking.

A fellow expatriate supported the observation and explained how difficult it is to have a deep and meaningful conversation with Chinese nationals; even those speaking

English: “I think that’s another frustration is, even if they speak English, you can’t have a conversation – it’s hard to have a conversation where they’re putting thought into it.”

A fellow expatriate commented upon the frustrations felt when genuine attempts to understand and communicate with host nationals are denied or mocked. She explained:

. . . I’m an outsider and I always will be . . . if you ask why things are done a certain way, that’s always the response that you get: ‘you just don’t understand China. You’re not Chinese so you could never understand’. Instead of explaining . . . it’s just: ‘oh, whatever. You’ll never understand’. . . you can live here, date, marry, have – whatever, but you’re never actually gonna [*sic*] be one.

Building Rapport with Older Generations

Participants also commented upon perceived intergenerational differences when attempting to build rapport with Chinese nationals. Whereas the young generation (those aged 25 and under) is eagerly attempting to communicate with Westerners and adopt Western trends (e.g., drinking coffee, listening to Western music, etc.), it would appear that previous generations were conditioned to be and remain suspicious of foreigners. One executive reported: “I was in a meeting on Friday. I was presenting to a group. It was an hour-long presentation, and I opened the floor to questions, and you could hear crickets in the room. And these were mid-30 to mid-40-year-old people.”

Social Awkwardness

Some participants seemed convinced that the One Child policy promoted by the Chinese government for several decades has negatively affected the behavior of Chinese

citizens in terms of potential ability to interact in society. One respondent made the following observations:

. . . because of the single child policy, a lot of people of this generation are almost a little socially awkward because they have only ever interacted with adults in the home. They don't have any siblings to almost learn cultural behavior or communication norms.

Some expatriates even described the perceived social awkwardness of some Chinese citizens as a form of "robotic behavior". One commented: "Again it could be residual of communism or whatever it might be, but . . . my boss here, who just moved over here . . . from the States . . . described it as almost robotic."

Another respondent used the same term and gave the following example:

. . . you get very much this robotic yes or no answer, which can be very frustrating. Like just tell me what you think . . . I'm going to have an opinion first, and then back it up with facts. Whereas here, it's I'm just going to state the facts. And there's no thought to put an opinion behind it . . . that's a little bit of a cultural anomaly that can be very frustrating.

Gaining Trust and Acceptance

Numerous participants commented upon the formality of social relationships in Chinese culture, the need to patiently build trust with Chinese citizens, and the challenges related to gaining both trust and acceptance; particularly in view of the multiple layers, networks and complexity characterizing Chinese culture. An informant described the culture as "very formal" while another participant described interaction as "very cold."

He further added: “Everybody kind of sticks to their own business. And once you meet someone and are introduced it’s very formal.”

Table 17

Chinese Cultural Factors & Sub-factors with a Negative Effect upon Informants’ Degree of Host Interaction Adjustment – Gaining Trust and Acceptance

Gaining Trust and Acceptance	- A Very Formal Socio-Cultural Environment - The Dragon Flies Skimming the Water
------------------------------	---

A Very Formal Socio-Cultural Environment

In terms of formality, an expatriate who married a Chinese citizen described the socio-cultural context as: “. . . even sometimes with family and interactions with especially my family because it’s a little bit of a government background, I guess. But very formal; very calculated.”

The Dragon Flies Skimming the Water

A fellow participant agreed and stated:

It really does take long. I mean, I’ve been coming to China for 15 years, and it’s probably just now in the last year or so started clicking where I feel like I have some pretty strong relationships and true friendships with Chinese outside of my family of course.

A respondent used a Chinese proverb to describe the time and perseverance needed to build the trust needed to build meaningful relationships in a culture that value harmony but remains suspicious of strangers; the dragon who flies over China scavenging for resources:

Yeah, I think there is a big trust factor. . . I think that some Chinese people think that foreigners come just to make money and leave. There's this expression in Chinese that 'the dragon flies skimming the water' and that kind of describes people that just do things for the sake of it but not really invested heavily or passionate and also that they're not there to stay. So they just fly by, they dip their toe in the water and then they leave. So I think some people think 'what's the real purpose of me investing my blood, sweat and tears into helping them learn Chinese if they're just going to move back to America next year?' So that's, I think, a notion that you have to really struggle to break through when you are forging relationships here.

Summary

Interviews of American business expatriates working in China revealed a multitude of Chinese cultural factors associated with their culture shock and having a negative effect upon their general, work and interactive degrees of socio-cultural adjustment.

First, the inquiry confirmed that all informants had indeed been exposed to the culture shock phenomenon as proven by their own direct and indirect references to multiple constructs presented in culture shock literature. Sorted alphabetically, direct references to Culture Shock Theory constructs included the notions of: (1) adaptation; (2) adjustment (phase 3 of the U-curve); (3) adjustment (phase 4 of the U-curve); (4) culture shock; (5) depression; (6) euphoria and excitement; (7) frustrations; and, (8) honeymoon.

Sorted alphabetically, indirect references to Culture Shock Theory encompassed the following array of constructs: (1) acculturation; (2) bi-culturalism; (3) crisis; (4) disintegration; (5) disorientation; (6) elation; (7) hostility; and, (8) new identity.

The appearance of these 16 constructs also supports the existence of the U-curve pattern presented in the literature as the U-Curve model of adjustment. Existence of the first stage appeared through direct and indirect references to the notions of: (1) honeymoon; (2) elation; and, (3) euphoria and excitement. Confirmation of the second phase of the U-curve model came from direct and indirect references to the following constructs: (1) crisis; (2) culture shock; (3) depression; (4) disintegration; (5) disorientation; (6) frustrations; and, (7) hostility. Exposure to the third phase of the model was described through constant referencing to the notion of adjustment. The fourth stage was revealed through direct and indirect references to the following constructs: (1) acculturation; (2) adaptation; (3) adjustment; (4) bi-culturalism, and, (5) new identity.

This exploratory inquiry further revealed existence of a fifth phase of adjustment referred to in this study as *nostalgia*. This phase appears to affect individuals who after long adaptation to Chinese culture have reached full acculturation and bi-culturalism but start second-guessing the worthiness of their extended living overseas. It is characterized by second thoughts, self-doubts and potential regrets. Individuals affected by this syndrome start second-guessing their very acculturation.

Lastly, the study did achieve its purpose by uncovering in the Chinese cultural environment, a broad array of cultural factors having a negative influence over informants' degrees of general, work and relational adjustment. Findings indicate that in addition to language barriers, numerous communication challenges negatively impact the

three degrees of socio-cultural adjustment, while government or bureaucratic interventions have a negative effect upon both general and work adjustment.

In addition to communication challenges and government or bureaucratic interference, the degree of general adjustment seems to be negatively influenced by: (a) cultural complexity, societal layers and guanxi networks; (b) conflicting time orientations; (c) latent chauvinism and xenophobia; (d) moral & ethical flexibility; and, (e) negative economic infrastructure, socio-cultural and environmental conditions.

Not counting communication challenges and government and bureaucratic interference, the degree of work adjustment seems to be negatively impacted by: (a) management challenges; (b) a difficult business culture; and, (c) economic rivalry.

Other than communication challenges, the degree of interaction adjustment seems to be negatively impacted by: (a) the formality of the Chinese socio-cultural environment, (b) the ability to gain trust and acceptance in a society that remains suspicious of strangers; and, (c) the challenges associated with building rapport with older generations.

Chapter V introduces a discussion about the relative importance and influence of uncovered factors over the culture shock and cross-cultural adjustment of American business expatriates. The findings are also compared to literature findings, while potential inferences for expatriate candidates and their employers are being extrapolated.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Through semi-guided interviews, the study explored the potential culture shock exposure of 14 American business expatriates working in mainland China. In addition, the study attempted to identify in the Chinese cultural milieu, factors leading to their culture shock and having a negative influence over three degrees of sociocultural adjustment. Findings are discussed at length in this chapter.

The specific contributions of this inquiry are fourfold. First, the study confirmed the culture shock exposure of interviewed ABEs working in large Chinese urban centers such as Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Suzhou. Second, it supported the association described in the literature between Culture Shock Theory and the U-Curve model of adjustment. Third, the study uncovered the existence of a stage further linking the U-Curve and W-Curve models of adjustment; I refer to this stage as *nostalgia*. It affects well-aculturated individuals and is characterized by self-doubt, second-thoughts and potential regrets. Fourth, consistent with its exploratory nature, the study identified in the Chinese cultural environment a series of factors with negative influence over the degrees of general, work and interactive adjustment of observed informants.

Confirmed Observations of Known Culture Shock Symptoms

Consistent with literature findings which contend that individuals exposed to foreign cultures for an extended period of time are more likely to experience culture shock, study results indicate that informants had indeed been exposed to culture shock and were familiar with the phenomenon. Confirmation of culture shock exposure came from multiple observations. First, several informants directly referred to the construct by using terms such as “culture shock,” “shock” or “shocking.” Second, study participants directly or indirectly referred to 16 dimensions associated with Culture Shock Theory and the U-Curve Theory (UCT) of adjustment models (e.g.: honeymoon, disorientation, frustrations, adjustment, adaptation).

Language Barriers and Other Communication Challenges

Triandis (1994) contends that the strongest cases of culture shock are often due to substantial language gaps. This aspect of culture shock seemed to be at play when examining data secured from interviews. Several participants commented extensively upon the complexity of Mandarin language and other prevalent local dialects (e.g., Shanghainese). Although lack of Mandarin fluency constitutes a key impediment and an important culture shock contributor, communication challenges were not solely limited to language barriers. The study showed that multiple dissimilarities in various aspects of communication such as directness or indirectness, tone of voice, sign languages, aphorisms (cheng yu's) can be at play to reinforce the culture shock of expatriates and their families. This is consistent with the findings of Furnham and Bochner (1986) who

conceive language challenges in terms of linguistic dissimilarity. This also supports research conducted by Stone (1991) and Björkman and Schaap (1994) who see comprehension of host country language as an essential attribute of effective expatriates.

A Generalized State of Disorientation

Study findings support Mumford's (1998) assertion that culture shock is not a psychiatric disorder but rather a generalized state of disorientation characterized by a multitude of symptoms, factors and dimensions (Rhinesmith, 1985). The fact that in spite of their exposure to culture shock, the 14 participants have successfully adjusted to the Chinese cultural environment is a testimony to their ability to overcome original bewilderment. Findings are also consistent with Adler's (2002) view in seeing culture shock as a natural reaction to the stress resulting from immersion to a new cross-cultural environment. In addition, results support the beneficial or growth and learning theoretical understanding of the phenomenon as participants overcame initial cross-cultural disorientation to successfully move toward adjustment and acculturation (P. S. Adler, 1975; Ruben, 1983; Kim, 2001).

Cultural Distance between Home and Host Culture

The notion of cultural distance surfaced throughout the investigation; this gives support to Furnham and Bochner (1986) who see cultural distance between home and host cultures as an important culture shock contributor. Consistent with literature findings, important cultural distance contributors were gaps in Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) and Long-

Term Orientation (LTO) (Franke et al., 1991; Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991; Searle & Ward, 1990).

Informants commented upon the higher power distance and most particularly the greater sense of order, authority, hierarchy and obedience found in Chinese society. This too is consistent with the findings of scholars who have commented upon the hierarchical and authoritarian dimensions of Confucian tradition (Buckley Ebrey, 1993, 1996; C. Lee, 2003; De Mente, 2009; Selmer, 2001b).

In addition, participants shared their perceptions of working in a more collectivist environment. Collectivism was observed in Chinese employees' lack of individual initiative and the fact that rewarding personal efforts would constitute a cultural faux-pas. An informant described the phenomenon as follows: "Nobody wants to be a shining star. It's not really looked on well to be an overachiever in a group..." This too is consistent with the research of Hofstede & Hofstede's (2005) who report an IDV index of 20 (low individualism) for Chinese culture and an index of 91 (high) for American culture.

Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) rank China as having a lower degree of Uncertainty Avoidance (30) compared to the U.S. (46), but consensus could not be reached among study participants. While some respondents supported existing research and perceived Chinese people as having a higher tolerance for ambiguity, others perceived Chinese people as being risk-averse. The lack of consensus appeared in quotes such as "They're very flexible people . . . they're not very law-abiding . . . that gives them sort of flexibility . . . nothing is really cut and dry . . . people are not into . . . putting a box around themselves..." and "it's a high-powered distance culture with . . . very high risk-

aversion; meaning, that they don't take chances . . . they are often afraid of making mistakes..."

The long-term time orientation of Chinese society, which fosters Confucian values such as patience (Fernandez & Underwood, 2007) and persistence created a cultural gap for American expatriates as well. The gap is well-illustrated by a quote from a participant who reported: ". . . in China, if you have ten things, you may get two things done, and you'll be frustrated by the other eight you can't get done.... It can wear you down until you realize, okay, this is just the way it is." Hall's (1966) Theory of Proxemics came to play as well in study findings as some participants commented extensively upon Chinese crowds. Perceptually, the distances separating the intimate, personal, social and public distances of American expatriates proved irrelevant in the Chinese cultural context; an environment dominated by masses.

However, as a construct, cultural distance encompasses a multiple of additional dimensions such as contrasting patterns of reasoning and communication, different levels of communication openness and directness, the perceived complexity of Chinese society, its multiple layers and networks, and perceived gaps in moral and ethical standards. The perceived risk aversion of Chinese employees, their perceived lack of creativity and initiative in proactively solving problems, and the constant need among Chinese individuals to save face were also seen as cultural distance contributors. Ultimately, all factors converge to confirm that contrasting norms, roles, values and symbols between Chinese and American cultures have produced different meanings and thus significant distance between the two cultures (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1993).

Social, Political and Economic Dissimilarity

In addition to language dissimilarities, Furnham and Bochner (1986) see social, political and economic dissimilarities as cultural shock influencers. Such perceived disparities emerged from data analysis as participants commented upon heavier levels of governmental and bureaucratic intervention, poorer levels of economic infrastructure and other socio-cultural and environmental disparities. For example, the gap between American and Chinese infrastructures was commented upon extensively. Additional comments were made about the poor quality of Chinese hospitals, Chinese banks, home appliances and other elements contributing to the culture shock of interviewed expatriates. Exposure to environmental hazards such as high levels of pollution, melamine-tainted milk and lead paint contributed to their culture shock as well.

Irritability, Anger and Hostility Toward Host Nationals

Some of the culture shock symptoms (i.e., irritability, anger and hostility toward host nationals) emerged from the study as well. Symptoms appeared in expressions such as “. . . I was really annoyed . . .” or “. . . it’s maddeningly frustrating...” Further, a few participants reported instances when they were exposed to fellow expatriates who became extremely irritable or angry after lengthy exposure to the Chinese cultural environment.

Irritability was further denoted in the tone of some of the informants during their interviews. One participant in particular declared being “appalled” by the condition of women in Chinese society. Irritability further surfaced whenever respondents commented upon Chinese traffic, driving and other cross-cultural conditions. Outright anger actually

appeared with expressions such as "... bullshit food..." [sic] or "you might just... want to hit one of them..." [sic] "...I wanted to kill them..." [sic].

Paranoia Toward Being Lied to or Cheated

Harris and Moran (1991) see paranoia about being lied to and cheated as another cultural shock symptom. This researcher is not qualified to assess whether informants who reported such feelings were paranoid or not. However, the notions of being lied to and cheated did surface in several interviews. Participants reported that at best, lying occurred through omission when landlords forgot to mention that rented apartment walls were painted with lead paint or forgot to mention the poor quality of appliances. Another form of lying occurred when incompetence for a given task or process was not mentioned in order to preserve face. Lying and cheating occurred as well when a 6-year old computer was sold as a brand new one. Feelings of being lied to and cheated further emerged throughout the investigation under the notion of moral flexibility as informants commented at length about on-going copyright infringements, broken contracts and various levels of observed corruption (Fernandez & Underwood, 2007).

Culture Shock Duration

The culture shock literature confirms that the phenomenon can vary from several weeks to several months, based upon a number of factors such as an expatriate's interpersonal traits, the level of experience with international assignments, the length of the expatriation process, the type (i.e.: technical, managerial) of mission, assignment location, cultural conditions found in the host country, spousal and family support,

corporate support, and pre-departure training (Adler, 2002; Befus, 1988; Brislin, 1993; Copeland & Griggs, 1985; Kohls, 1979; Triandis, 1994).

With regards to the duration of their culture shock, interviewed expatriates provided data that are consistent with literature findings. Some were forced to adjust very quickly. Other participants measured the duration of the culture shock in months. However, others described culture shock as an ongoing phenomenon that still affects expatriates who have successfully lived in China for numerous years.

Confirmed U-Curve Appearance

A second contribution of this exploratory study comes from the fact that it supports evidence for U-Curve Theory (UCT) or model of adjustment. Confirmation of a U-shape appears through references to 16 constructs associated with the four stages of the U-Curve model of adjustment; eight of the constructs were directly referred to by informants, while eight were not cited but were appropriately described. The 16 constructs and four U-curve stages are discussed in the following section. Findings thus parallel those of Selmer (1999) who found in a survey of Western (including Americans) expatriate managers assigned to China, existence of a U-curve in the general, work and interactive dimensions of socio-cultural adjustment.

Stage 1 - Elation, Euphoria, Excitement and Honeymoon

Study findings support the existence of the first stage of the U-Curve model of adjustment often referred to in the literature as honeymoon (Oberg, 1960; Pedersen,

1995). In their responses, informants also described or referred to the initial phase of elation (Richardson, 1974) or euphoria and excitement (Brown, 1980) that often characterizes initial exposure to a foreign cultural environment. They used words such as “exciting”, “thrilling”, “challenging”, “wonderful” and “vibrant”.

Stage 2 – Crisis, Culture Shock, Disorientation, Frustration, Hostility, Disintegration, and Depression

Similarly, the study confirmed that the honeymoon stage is quickly followed by the crisis phase of culture shock, which off-sets the initial phase of excitement. Using words like “shock”, “shocked”, “shocking” and “crash”, or making comments such as “. . . that was a big shock . . .” and “. . . we were shocked by was how foreign everything was . . .” or “. . . eventually, you’ll crash”, participants illustrated these multiple characterizations (Oberg, 1954, 1960).

Culture shock occurred for multiple reasons. Some of the participants found sharp cultural differences between their native culture (i.e., U.S. culture), or the culture of previous expatriation destinations (i.e., Brazil, Canada, Japan, etc.). Other expatriates were shocked by their sudden exposure to a vastly different socio-cultural context. A participant quoted “. . . you’re just exposed not only to China but a whole world of different values and cultures.” Another implication of culture shock is that “. . . it just makes life all that more complicated.”

The linguistic dissimilarity (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Triandis, 1994) and foreignness of Chinese culture were reported as playing a role in the culture shock of participants. Several participants commented extensively upon the crucial influence of

language barriers and other communication hurdles in building up frustrations. An informant stated: “. . . you can’t read anything, you can’t understand anything. You basically communicate through random sign language and that oftentimes doesn’t work.”

Disorientation

The notions of culture shock and disorientation have often been associated in the literature (Adelman, 1988; P. Harris & Moran, 1991; Rhinesmith, 1985). Rhinesmith narrows down culture shock contributors to two fundamental phenomena: loss of the familiar old environment and the simultaneous challenges of the new surroundings. Adelman (1988) further believes that physical and psychological disorientation can negatively impact expatriates’ sense of mastery and self-esteem.

The disorientation aspect of culture shock did appear in the study as several participants illustrated or referred to the construct. One respondent used a metaphor and referred to new expatriates immersed in the Chinese cultural environment as “infants”. He referred to the loss of the familiar old environment by expressing “. . . we’re just learning from scratch . . .” Another informant referred to disorientation by emphasizing the challenges resulting from attempts to “peel off” the multiple societal layers characterizing the complexity of the Chinese cultural environment. Respondents further alluded to the disorienting effect that sudden exposure to crowds and masses can have upon newcomers. One illustrated disorientation by contrasting the loneliness of an individual lost in a crowd of strangers. He said: “Here it’s just every man for himself.”

The inquiry further identified the role played by the unrelenting pace of Chinese economic and socio-cultural transformation as a disorientation contributor. One respondent reported: “. . . until you live in the center of it... it really doesn’t hit home....

I'm missing entire weeks, and . . . going 1,000 miles an hour; I think that's the part that almost becomes the biggest shock."

Frustrations

The notion of 'frustration' described in culture shock literature consistently appeared among interview responses (Adler, 2002; Björkman & Schaap, 1994; Kealey, 1978; Kohls, 1979; P. Harris & Moran, 1991). It is a prevalent construct that appeared over and over across interviews and confirms the impact of the Chinese cultural environment on the culture shock of study participants. Described frustrations were the result of multiple factors like language barriers and other communication challenges (Björkman & Schaap, 1994; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Triandis, 1994), inherent difficulty of Mandarin language (De Mente, 2009), cultural distance (Furnham & Bochner, 1986), utmost foreignness and complexity of the Chinese cultural environment, differences in moral and ethical standards, perceived chauvinism and xenophobia.

According to participants, the management of priorities and time constraints by time-pressed executives in a culture valuing patience (Fernandez & Underwood, 2007) and long-term time orientation (Franke et al., 1991) tended to exacerbate frustrations as well. An informant reported: ". . . in China, if you have ten things, you may get two things done, and you'll be frustrated by the other eight you can't get done."

Inconvenience and challenges associated with leisurely activities too were identified as a frustration contributor. One participant affirmed: "It's incredibly inconvenient. It's incredibly frustrating not to have the comforts of life that we're used to." The construct supports the research by Birdseye and Hill (1995) who found that expatriates and their dependents attach much importance to material life satisfaction.

The significant bureaucratic rigidities of Chinese culture were actually described as playing an important role in the perceived complexity of the Chinese cultural environment. One interviewee stated: “It’s just a matter of time, a matter of the bureaucracy it takes to get through those two things. It can wear you down . . .”

Concerns about health, sanitation and the cleanliness of food apparently play a role in triggering expatriates frustrations as well. One expatriate reported: “It’s incredibly frustrating just to deal with going to a grocery store and saying ‘God this place stinks’ [*sic*]. I’m not sure if the food I’m eating is clean.” This is consistent with Kohls’ (1979) list of culture shock contributors.

Findings also support Björkman and Schaap’s (1994) assertions about the fact that expatriates will experience frustrations, regardless of success level. In addition, results converge toward those of Goodall et al. (2006, 2007) who observed that informants had a propensity to believe in the uniqueness of their personal frustrations, when similar frustrations were actually reported by several informants.

Stress, Hostility, Disintegration and Depression

Constructs such as hostility (Smalley, 1963), disintegration (P. S. Adler, 1975; Pedersen, 1995) and depression (Bhagat & Prien 1996; P. Harris & Moran, 1991; Richardson, 1974) appeared in this inquiry, and further support both the exposure to culture shock of interviewed expatriate and existence of the crisis phase of UCT. In their descriptions, respondents used terms such as “aggressive,” “crash”, “loss of control”, “losing it” and “depression”. One participant commented: “. . . I became more aggressive in China.” In this instance, differences in communication patterns (i.e., direct versus

indirect) triggered hostile feelings, which is consistent with Smalley's (1963) characterization of the crisis phase of culture shock as a hostile one.

Other respondents emphasized the role of stress (Bhagat & Prien, 1996; Copeland & Griggs, 1985; J. W. Berry et al., 1987). One participant posited: ". . . the stress just make people react in ways they wouldn't normally do back home." Another described how stress is negatively affecting an expatriate colleague who has worked in China for five years and renders him increasingly hostile toward host nationals.

A few participants openly described how heavy work schedules, constant traveling and cross-cultural antecedents led to personal stress and, at times, depression. One reported that a phase of depression can last for years. Another respondent warned that facing a phase of depression is almost ineluctable. He suggested that expatriate candidates considered for assignments in mainland China should negotiate expatriation contracts granting access to clinical counseling.

Stage 3 – Recovery, Adjustment, Coping

Study findings support the existence of the third stage of adjustment proposed in the U-Curve model, as well. This phase is referred to in the literature as 'recovery' (Oberg, 1954, 1960; Richardson, 1974), 'coping' (Kealey, 1978) or 'adjustment' (Smalley, 1963). This latter term was the one most frequently used by participants as they described progressive escape from the crisis phase. Respondents commented at length upon the factors leading to the transition from crisis and culture shock to recovery and adjustment. First, the study confirmed literature findings about the progressive and gradual nature of the adjustment phenomenon (Adler, 2002; Befus, 1988; Brislin, 1993;

Copeland & Griggs, 1985; Kohls, 1979; Triandis, 1994). An interviewee reported: “. . . that makes it just a continuing process for me to adjust to Chinese culture. I think I’ll be adjusting as long as I’m breathing.”

Second, findings substantiate the crucial role played by Chinese language fluency in the adjustment process (Björkman & Schaap, 1994; Selmer, 2005b; Stone, 1991). An informant encapsulated the thoughts of fellow expatriates when declaring: “The key to the adjustment process is being able to speak Chinese. And without that, there’s this wall around you at all times . . .”

Interview responses indicated that periods of adjustment varied from a few months to several years. One informant highlighted the positive role played by cultural acceptance and explained “You finally start to adjust, to accept life here and just dealing with the challenges of being an expat in a very strange country.” However, it would appear that informants’ feelings toward their own adjustment can vary according to circumstances. A respondent reported: “Sometimes I feel like I’ve adjusted really well. . . . Other times I feel like I’m completely maladjusted.”

Furthermore, several important distinctions emerged from the data. One respondent distinguished between truly adapting and simply surviving constant cross-cultural challenges. He gave the following explanation: “There are moments where the culture can be overwhelming . . . but that’s not adapting to the culture; that’s just surviving it at that moment.” Another interviewee brought forward a distinction between genuine adjustment and mere tolerance. Whereas adjustment implies proactive attitudinal efforts toward intercultural adaptation, tolerance conveys notions of suspicion and passive acceptance of the host culture.

The role played by attitude in successful adjustment was further confirmed by the fact that some respondents contrasted the frustrations resulting from work and life in China to the many benefits resulting from that experience. A participant declared: “I started to realize the good things and positive things about China; the human aspect of it. And I started to overlook some of those things that bothered me when I first arrived.”

In addition, the study validated the significant influence that family adjustment bears over intercultural adjustment as supported by the following statement: “There’s no doubt... he needs to pay attention and makes sure, I think, that his family is adjusted.” This statement was corroborated by a similar one stating: “What becomes the biggest concern . . . for most expats, is how your family is adjusting.” This too is consistent with literature findings (Black & Stephens, 1989; Lee, 2005, 2007; Tung, 1987).

Stage 4 – Adaptation, Acculturation. New Identity & Bi-culturalism

Through the words and shared experiences of 14 informants, this exploratory study corroborated existence of the fourth phase of the U-Curve model of adjustment. As done with previous UCT phases, multiple scholars proposed different labels (i.e., adaptation, acculturation, bi-culturalism, new identity) to typify the phenomenon.

Participants’ inputs about their intercultural adaptation covered a broad array of descriptions from feelings of clear adaptation to feelings of confusion and uncertainty; concepts seen by Gao and Gudykunst (1990) as inherently related to cultural adaptation. Other participants have lived in China for extended amounts of time, married or lived with Chinese citizens, started bi-cultural families and have reached bi-culturalism by developing a second cultural identity (Smalley, 1963).

The notion of trust constitutes a fundamental dimension associated with intercultural adjustment of American business expatriates working in China as trust-related constructs such as *xinyong* (personal trust) and *zhong jian ren* (strong trust in a colleague or associate) represent key aspects of Chinese culture. The study confirmed that trust and mutual respect are essential to the building of fruitful relationships with Chinese nationals as well as the work and general environments.

In conclusion, the study revealed that through their immersion in the Chinese cultural milieu, informants were indeed exposed to the culture shock phenomenon. Results further confirmed a strong association between Culture Shock Theory and the U-Curve model of adjustment, two of the theoretical frameworks associated with this inquiry. Moreover, informants referred to a broad array of constructs pertaining to ten of the 11 culture shock models presented in this study; these models encompass over forty years of scholarly research on the culture shock and U-Curve phenomena. Findings are also consistent with those of Selmer (1999) who through a survey of Western expatriate managers assigned to mainland China confirmed appearance of a U-curve in the general, work and relational degrees of socio-cultural adjustment.

Possible Existence of a New Zone Between the U-curve and W-curve Models

The U-Curve Model of adjustment is often associated to the W-Curve model of adjustment. Whereas the U-shaped curve culminates with adaptation (Brown, 1980), acculturation (Richardson, 1974), bi-culturalism (Smalley, 1963) and new identity (Garza-Guerrero, 1974), the W-shaped model adds the notion of re-entry which focuses

upon expatriates' return to their homeland (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). The primary emphasis of that model is to examine expatriates exposure to a reversed phase of cultural adjustment--adjustment to the native culture. A weakness of the W-Curve model is that it assumes that expatriates returning to their original culture at the end of their expatriation contract or upon premature cancellation of that contract. The model does not consider existence of a potential phase between the bi-culturalism marking the apogee of the U-Curve model of adjustment and the re-entry phase added by the W-shape hypothesis. Moreover, the literature does not make any indication of research associated with the unique challenges of fully-aculturated individuals wrestling with their bi-culturalism.

The study uncovered that some successful and fully acculturated American expatriates who have happily lived in China for extensive periods of time, started families there after marrying Chinese citizens, and created bi-cultural families are wrestling with the worthiness of the endeavor. They wrestle with questions such as: should they live in their new country forever or should they return home? Could they adjust to potential transformation of their native culture? Could their family adjust to that new environment?

Nostalgia

According to participants' accounts, this phase is characterized by second thoughts, self-doubts, potential regrets and a certain melancholy about what the life of the expatriate could have been if he/she had chosen a different career path and never expatriated. I refer to this phase as *nostalgia*.

This phase of nostalgia is very different from the re-entry stage converting the U-curve model to the W-shaped model of adaptation. While the U-curve model essentially

focuses upon the cycle of phases affecting an expatriate between original feelings of euphoria and excitement, the subsequent disillusion phase, and progressive adjustment toward full acculturation and bi-culturalism, the W-curve model essentially adds a fifth dimension by focusing upon the challenges associated with re-entry to one's original culture. As time goes on, individuals returning to their native land or the culture left before an expatriate assignment find out that their progressive adaptation to a new cultural environment has actually affected their original cultural conditioning. This process creates a chasm in the former cultural conditioning. Re-entry to the original culture thus creates a reverse cultural shock as the individual now needs to fill the cultural gap created through exposure and adaptation to a second culture.

Although Kohls (1979) identified homesickness as a culture shock symptom, the notion of nostalgia that emerged from this study constitutes a different factor.

Homesickness appears in the early phases of expatriation when some individuals who cannot properly adapt, just want to go home. Contrarily, the stage of nostalgia emerging from this investigation appears to affect individuals who have reached full acculturation. After spending numerous years in China, getting fully acculturated, marrying Chinese citizens and establishing bi-cultural families in that country, these individuals start having second thoughts and potential regrets about the merits of a lifetime decision.

From a cross-cultural research standpoint, the nostalgic phase uncovered in this study is interesting for several reasons. First, it is distinct from the fourth stage of the U-curve model and the fifth one added by the W-shaped model. It follows acculturation and bi-culturalism but precedes re-entry. The acculturated expatriate, who after years of adaptation to the new culture has reached a bi-cultural identity starts questioning the

worthiness of his/her life journey. He or she starts having doubts and second thoughts and wrestles with questions such as: “was it worth it?”

This expatriate has not necessarily decided to return to the native culture. This creates a dilemma; should the expatriate return or not to the native land? What is home? Is home the land of the native culture or is home the land of the new culture? Staying in the new culture, the one the expatriate worked so hard at adjusting to, may prolong the nostalgia and turn into potential melancholy. However, returning to the native land may expose the individual to re-entry shock; a shock potentially proportional to the length of time spent overseas. Will the American culture found by an expatriate who spent fifteen or more years in China be the one that he or she left behind? If not, will the individual be able to adapt to the transformed cultural environment? What about his or her family? Will the foreign spouse or family be willing to leave their own culture? If so, will be able to adapt to the new culture? Finding answers to such questions may be worthy of additional research. Again, it bears repeating that revelation of a stage of self-doubt and second-guessing by fully acculturated expatriates about their career and lifetime choices was an unintended output of this exploratory inquiry--a result worthy of additional research in an increasingly globalized world.

Chinese Cultural Factors Having a Negative Influence Upon the Sociocultural Adjustment of American Business Expatriates in China

In addition to retaining Culture Shock Theory and U-Curve Theory (UCT) as needed theoretical frameworks, this exploratory inquiry was structured around Black et

al's (1991) empirically-supported (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Black & Gregersen, 1990, 1991a; Black & Stephens, 1989; Hechanova et al., 2003; McEvoy & Parker, 1995; Ward & Kennedy, 1996) model of intercultural adjustment, which considers three primary degrees of in-country adjustment: (1) general adjustment; (2) work adjustment; and (3) interaction with host nationals or relational adjustment. Specifically, this exploratory study attempted to identify in the Chinese cultural environment factors having a negative influence over these three degrees of adjustment. The study achieved its purpose; major findings are summarized in Table 18 and are commented upon.

Table 18
Chinese Cultural Factors with a Negative Effect over American Business Expatriates' Degree of General, Work and Interactive Adjustment

General Adjustment Factors	Work Adjustment Factors	Interaction Adjustment Factors
Communication Challenges	Communication Challenges *	Communication Challenges
Cultural Complexity, Societal Layers and Guanxi Networks		
Conflicting Time Orientations		
Latent Chauvinism and Xenophobia		
Moral & Ethical Flexibility		
Government & Bureaucratic Interference	Government Interference	
Negative Socio-cultural, Economic Infrastructure & Environmental Conditions		
Management Challenges		
A Difficult Business Culture		
Economic Rivalry		
A Very Formal Socio-cultural Environment		
Gaining Trust and Acceptance		
Building Rapport With Older Generations		

* *Work-related communication challenges appear in Ch. 4 under Management Challenges as they are primarily management-related.*

*Chinese Cultural Factors with a Negative Influence over the Degree of General
Adjustment*

Communication Challenges

Consistent with literature findings, communication challenges pertaining to lack of language fluency, language barriers and language dissimilarity were identified in this study as having a negative effect upon the general adjustment of study participants.

Reported difficulties were numerous. Of particular significance is the sheer complexity of Putonghua (Mandarin), China's official language. (Black & Gregersen, 1991a, 1991b; Björkman & Schaap, 1994; C. Lee, 2003; De Mente, 2009; Fernandez & Underwood, 2007; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Gallo, 2008; Hullinger, 1995; McEnery & DesHarnais, 1990; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Naumann, 1982; Plafker, 2007; Stone, 1991; Tadla, 2007; Triandis, 1994).

Findings indicate that: (a) the lack of commonality between English and Chinese languages; (b) the sheer complexity of Chinese language; and, (c) the fact that a majority of Chinese citizens do not speak English, add a great deal of foreignness and complexity to expatriates' experience, and negatively affect their general adjustment. A participant illustrated such issues with a "fish out of water" metaphor, conveying that without proper language skills, one feels unable to properly function in the Chinese cultural milieu. Study outcomes pertaining to language difficulties are thus in harmony with literature

findings related to the root causes of frustrations experienced by Western expatriate managers (Björkman & Schaap, 1994).

Study findings also support Selmer's (2005b) conclusions about the vital importance for expatriates to learn basic Mandarin before accepting a posting in China. Doing so will greatly enhance one's ability to function in the Chinese socio-cultural environment, and will greatly help interaction with host nationals by conveying a willingness to discover and embrace their culture.

In addition to confirming the significant impact that language barriers and language dissimilarity bear over expatriates, findings revealed that other aspects of communication negatively affect the general adjustment of expatriates. Identification of such factors constitutes an important contribution of this exploratory inquiry.

Several participants commented upon the tension resulting from the direct and linear style of communication of American expatriate managers and the indirect or wholistic style of communication associated with Chinese culture, as direct communication is often perceived as rude or offensive in Chinese cultural environment. Likewise, informants reported feelings of frustration when observing Chinese citizens' inability to speak or answer questions directly. One participant reported that Chinese people "... always put reason first and then conclusion, instead of the bottom line."

Furthermore, respondents made numerous comments about the cautious nature of Chinese communication. Informants associated fear to indirect communication. Several participants reported feeling like Chinese citizens have been conditioned by fear (i.e.: fear of power and ruling authorities) and always keep their options open when communicating. According to study participants, fear is primarily due to three factors:

fear of teachers, fear of ruling powers and fear of losing face. As a result, no answer can ever be considered a definite one, and Chinese citizens are perceived as overly cautious if not apologetic when expressing themselves. This dimension was identified in the work and interactive degrees of adjustment, as well.

Moreover, rather than directly addressing an issue, which was described as impolite, Chinese communication first explains the context or uses a different logic. This illustrates the importance of contextual and wholistic thinking in Chinese communication, which is in direct contrast to the direct, linear and, at times, blunt modes of communication favored by Americans.

Subtleties too were reported as an important aspect of Chinese communication. They too contribute to the indirect nature of Chinese communication. An informant reported: “. . . if you don’t realize the subtleties of these – of the culture, the subdivision, then, you’re not going to be as effective.” Grasping such subtleties takes time and creates another limiting factor in cross-cultural communication (Plafker, 2007).

Study participants further highlighted the need to speak softly in Chinese society. A strong cultural offense would be for an expatriate to speak bluntly or loudly as doing so could affect one’s face. This is consistent with the fact that Chinese society values harmony. Although speaking loudly or screaming when interacting with others, particularly employees of business partners can be detrimental in American culture, doing so is really offensive in Chinese culture. Newly-arrived expatriates must cope with this aspect of communication, which reflects the importance of patience and composure in Chinese culture. An informant clearly expressed this dimension when stating: “. . . you also learn in a business meeting, you speak quietly. You don’t . . . state your conclusion

directly.” Constant negotiation too was reported as having a negative effect upon the degree of general adjustment. American expatriates are simply not used to constant bargaining when going to a store or market. However, bargaining seems to be a way of life in Chinese culture. This is consistent with the findings of Tadla (2007) who reports that lack of proper conversational skills considerably weakens bargaining power at local markets. Combined, these sharp linguistic dissimilarities and communication barriers have a negative effect upon the general degree of adjustment of ABEs working in China. These results shed light upon additional factors pertaining to the various communication challenges having a negative influence over the general adjustment of ABEs working in China.

Cultural Complexity, Societal Layers and Guanxi Networks

One of the study’s greatest revelations came from participants’ remarks about the perceived complexity of the Chinese cultural environment and how such complexity negatively affects their degree of general adjustment. The reported complexity supports Plafker’s (2007) description of the Chinese cultural environment. Perceived complexity is due to several elements. First, Chinese society was seen as stratified and composed of multiple layers and networks. Second, discovering, understanding, penetrating and tapping such layers and networks requires language fluency, patient building of trust, constant networking, entertaining and influencing, and thus time, and money.

The words “complexity,” “layers” and “networks” appeared repeatedly throughout the study. One participant described Chinese culture as “. . . extremely multi-layered, multi-faceted and complex.” The term ‘multi-layered’ was actually used by

several participants. Their description of layers includes the “surface layer”, the “system layer”, the “treatment of the foreigners layer”, and the “deep feelings layer”. The surface layer is the most apparent one; the one that expatriates and their families interface with daily in the general environment, at work and in their interaction with host nationals. The second layer (i.e.: treatment of foreigners) pertains to the governmental, political and judicial systems and how they view and treat foreigners. A participant described the third layer as having to do with the way Chinese citizens “. . . believe foreigners should be treated in a big picture perspective; how useful foreigners truly are to China.” The respondent further commented: “. . . but they won’t talk about it.” Lastly, according to the same informant, one of the deepest layers has to do with deeply-held feelings towards “making money and enforceability of rights with regard to everybody who may not be from their particular city or their particular country.”

In addition to the sheer complexity of the multiple layers found in the Chinese cultural environment, the apparent contradictions existing between these layers further contribute to culture shock. Informants reported being often surprised by the fact that what expatriates see or perceive on the surface is often very different that what they discover when exposed to deeper layer. A respondent illustrated this tension by explaining how a Chinese citizen initially perceived as a cordial business partner became very angry when the respondent proposed to marry his daughter. Overnight, latent xenophobia and deeply held feelings about foreigners and American culture turned cordial relations into bitter ones. This represents an important aspect of this research.

The complexity resulting from the layers or stratification of Chinese society is twofold. First, the layers are often contradictory. For example, the apparent friendliness

and joviality of Chinese citizens toward foreigners is in contrast to deep-held xenophobic or nationalistic feelings. When peeling off the layers, participants often uncovered hidden dimensions such as latent xenophobia, ruthless business behavior or an ambition to take advantage of foreigners. Second, uncovering the interconnectedness of socio-cultural layers represents an arduous and time-consuming task negatively impacting general adjustment. This too constitutes an important outcome of this exploratory inquiry.

Moreover, the complexity associated with the multi-layering of Chinese society is further reinforced by existence of multiple guanxi networks. This is consistent with literature findings on the fundamental Chinese cultural concept of guanxi, which refers to personal relationships or connections (Fernandez & Underwood, 2007; Gallo; 2008; C. Lee, 2003; Luo, 1997; Plafker, 2007; Su, Mitchell & Sirghy, 2007; Tadla, 2007; Tsang, 1998). Björkman and Schaap (1994) in particular warn expatriates about the significance of the guanxi challenge as it is extremely cumbersome for Westerners and most particularly new comers to access and develop needed guanxi networks. One respondent stated: “. . . you have to be aware that in China that there are networks foreigners don’t see.” Accessing, developing and taking advantage of Guanxi networks requires significant investments in time and money. This, according to informants, directly contributes to the culture shock of many ABEs and negatively affects their degree of general adjustment.

Conflicting Time Orientations

Findings highlight the negative effects that different time orientations are having upon the degree of general adjustment of participants. The difference in time orientation

is twofold. Consistent with literature findings, participants reported the challenges resulting from significant time constraints in a culture with high LTO (Franke et al., 1991; Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005), which fosters Confucian values such as patience and persistence. This matters as expatriates are under pressure to meet professional obligations while denied the time needed to understand or adapt to the Chinese culture (Tung, 1982; Björkman & Schaap, 1994).

Moreover, findings indicate that informants felt further disoriented by the rapid pace of transformation of Chinese society, which is in sharp contrast with the slowness associated with guanxi building. An informant sent by an MNC on multiple expatriate assignments contrasted life in Shanghai to life in New York, and expressed his surprise at the speed at which Chinese society is being transformed. He declared: “The pace of Shanghai at least is like nothing we’ve ever seen. It moves at a different rate.... I’m losing full weeks . . .” This constitutes a great time paradox that must be understood in micro and macro terms. At the micro level, Chinese individuals are perceived as moving very slowly due to the patient building of trust and guanxi connections; contrarily, at a macro level, China is being transformed at an unprecedented pace. Both these elements contribute to the stress experienced by expatriates who must adapt to two types of Chinese velocity (J.W. Berry et al., 1987; Bhagat & Prien, 1996; Copeland & Griggs, 1985).

Latent Chauvinism and Xenophobia

Study findings indicate that the general adjustment of informants was negatively affected by perceived chauvinistic and xenophobic tendencies toward foreigners. This

finding is consistent with the contradictions observed in the interplay of multiple societal layers. On one hand, Chinese nationals were perceived as warm, friendly and hospitable; however, informants' accounts indicate that expatriates working in China are often confronted to deeply-held feelings of suspicion toward foreigners. This is consistent with the findings of Kynge (2006) who highlights a Chinese adage stating "*mei wai you bie*", which means "foreigners and Chinese are different" (p. 217).

Respondents supported their views by reporting Chinese cultural metaphors such as 'foreign devils' (C. Lee, 2003) and 'dancing monkeys' often used to characterize foreigners. At the core of Chinese cultural environment factors seems to be four key factors: (a) the parochialism of traditionally rural China and a suspicion of strangers; (b) the strong cultural and national identity of Chinese people; (c) the mistrust of foreign intentions, itself rooted in historical factors (e.g.: Mongol, Japanese invasions; *gunboat diplomacy*); (d) government-sponsored nationalism; and, (2) parochialism and chauvinism due to lack of education (C. Lee, 2003; Gallo, 2008; Kynge, 2006).

Study informants who are fluent in Mandarin expressed the frustrations felt when immersed in popular environment and hearing Chinese citizens make condescending comments toward foreigners (e.g., foreign devils). Such frustrations have a negative impact on the general adjustment of expatriates as they negatively affect trust and undermine efforts needed to build rapport with host nationals. According to participants, the strong cultural and national identity of Chinese people fuels xenophobic connotations through the dissipation of stereotypes toward foreigners. In that environment, foreigners are welcomed guests but nothing more (Kynge, 2006).

Some well-aculturated informants expressed sadness about this issue. They have lived in China for a long time, embraced its food, language, people, culture and values, married Chinese citizens and/or raised their families in China and, at times, don't even have any desire to return to the U.S. Yet, in spite of such commitments, they do not feel fully accepted by the Chinese community at large. Another aspect of perceived xenophobic tendencies comes from feelings of being used for propaganda purposes.

Moral & Ethical Flexibility

Study findings indicate a strong consensus among participants about the negative effects that the perceived moral and ethical flexibility of the Chinese cultural milieu had on their general adjustment. In the words of participants, moral and ethical flexibility took many forms. The construct encompasses issues such as reckless driving, feelings of being lied, cheated or robbed, being exposed to unsafe environments (e.g.; lead paint) being used for propaganda, various forms of corruption, and racketeering. Participants expressed strong feeling about the phenomenon and used words such as “uncaring”, “unethical”, “unsocialistic”, “Godless” (Tadla, 2007). The perceived flexibility of Chinese culture is consistent with the findings of De Mente (2009) who contends that “. . . the Chinese are content to leave things flexible. . .” (p. 158). It also fits Gallo’s (2008) description who contends that Chinese understanding of ethics fluctuates between three poles: “. . . traditional Chinese ethics, Western ethics and Communist ethics.” (p. 38). For Gallo, reference to either system is a function of time, circumstances or interlocutor.

Participants reported struggling with defining the boundaries between guanxi and corruption (Fernandez & Underwood, 2007). They must constantly wrestle with the fine

art of conforming to cultural expectations and succumbing to illegal or unethical temptations. This is consistent with the findings of Plafker (2007) who affirms that although guanxi and corruption are closely related, the two constructs are somewhat different as guanxi lacks a material bribery dimension. Plafker posits “the favors bestowed may be similar, but the motivation is entirely different” (p. 98). Similarly, BATTERY and Wong (1999) contend that other significant Chinese cultural traits such as xinyong (trust), mianzi (face) and renqing (favors) are closely associated with guanxi and require particular attention from expatriates willing to succeed in China.

Government & Bureaucratic Interference

Results brought light upon the negative influence that Chinese governmental and bureaucratic meddling had over informants’ degree of general adjustment. Interferences encompassed visa issues, vague, incomplete, changing or contradictory regulations, inconsistencies among various levels of government, red tape, heavy paperwork, bureaucratic navigation through guanxi networks and exposure to corruption and ethical pressures. Such findings are consistent with the ones reported by Fernandez and Underwood (2007) who comment upon the “. . . immaturity of the [Chinese] regulatory and legal system. . .” (p. 217) and highlight the importance of “. . . special guanxi . . .” (p. 214) when dealing with Chinese authorities.

Negative Socio-Cultural & Environmental Conditions

Negative socio-cultural and environmental conditions that negatively affect the degree of general adjustment of interviewed ABEs encompass a broad array of factors.

These include being exposed to and fighting Chinese crowds, unbearable traffic and driving conditions, hot weather, lack of product safety, high humidity, and very high levels of pollution.

Poor Infrastructure Conditions

In addition to negative socio-cultural and environmental factors, poor infrastructure conditions were cited as having a negative effect upon the general adjustment of informants. Among negative factors frequently cited were an archaic banking system (Tadla, 2007), which is inconsistent with the country's growing economic power, and require expatriates to hold large amounts of cash, crowded hospitals, and lack of convenience stores. The overall lack of reliability found in Chinese appliances was frequently reported as a negative factor as well.

Regional differences too were emphasized as infrastructure conditions varied greatly among Chinese provinces. Although Shanghai was favorably perceived as one of the most modern cities in the world, other cities were not perceived in similarly favorable terms. Participants further contrasted China's overall and poorly perceived infrastructure to countries associated with previous expatriate assignments, most particularly Japan, which had far more advanced levels of national infrastructure. This is consistent with the findings of Birdseye and Hill (1995) who highly the importance placed by American expatriates upon materialism, comfort and living conditions.

*Chinese Cultural Factors with a Negative Influence over the Degree of Work
Adjustment*

Communication Challenges

Study findings indicate that in addition to having a negative impact on informants' degree of general adjustment, various communication challenges are having a negative effect on their degree of work adjustment as well. Although similar antecedents (e.g., language barriers, contrasting patterns of reasoning and communication, etc.) negatively affect both general and work degrees of adjustment, additional factors were identified as having a negative influence over the degree of work adjustment. One factor pertains to perceived gaps between the English-speaking and alternative skills of Chinese employees. Several informants indicated that, at times, Chinese employees are hired for their strong English-speaking skills at the expense of more technically-competent individuals with lower levels of English competency. Although the process is effective in off-setting expatriates' own Mandarin deficiencies, it can prove detrimental to the organization in the long-term as technically-competent individuals are left aside, or end up working for the competition.

In addition, the cautious nature of Chinese employees can prove detrimental when expecting employees to express themselves or report problems frankly and without fear. The tone of voice or body language used in business meetings or when interacting with Chinese employees also requires constant control and attention, to avoid offending host nationals (Tadla, 2007). This can be challenging for newly-arrived, ambitious, impatient, inexperienced expatriates who can inadvertently offend a host national or end a meeting through a simple cultural faux-pas. According to participants, newly-arrived expatriates

must also learn how to ask contextually-relevant questions as Chinese employees and business partners constantly question the context associated with a given question.

The study further uncovered communication differences between older (those 25 and over) and younger (age 25 or under) generations of Chinese citizens. While young citizens are willing to take chances and more openly express themselves, as they would in the West, older citizens are unable to do so. This was perceived as a negative factor as older workers represent a majority in the workplace. This is consistent with the broad array of language and communication challenges reported in the literature (Björkman & Schaap, 1994; Black & Gregersen, 1991a, 1991b; C. Lee, 2003; De Mente, 2009; Fernandez & Underwood, 2007; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Gallo, 2008; Hullinger, 1995; McEnery & DesHarnais, 1990; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Naumann, 1982; Plafker, 2007; Stone, 1991; Tadla, 2007; Triandis, 1994).

Lastly, study findings confirm the vital importance of translators in off-setting expatriate managers' deficiencies in language mastery (Davidson, 1987).

Management Challenges

Managerial challenges represent the broadest category of Chinese cultural antecedents having a negative influence over informants' degree of work adjustment. This is consistent with Plafker (2007) who contends that traditionally, Chinese enterprises have never paid much attention to the multiple dimensions of management, and most particularly the importance of middle management. Several factors are consistent with those resulting from previous inquiries; others emerge naturally from the study.

Participants reported having to adapt their management styles and methods from individual or employee-based (e.g., direct praise or reprimand) to group-oriented ones consistent with the collectivist nature of Chinese society. An informant even reported having four types of management style to adjust to a more complex work reality. This is consistent with literature findings (Goodall et al., 2006, 2007; Kaye & Taylor, 1997).

A collectivist orientation (Hofstede, 1980) was also found in the fact that individual employees should not be praised in front of their peers; doing so would constitute a cultural and managerial non-sense, and would embarrass the employee or make him/her lose face (De Mente, 2009; Gallo, 2008; C. Lee, 2003; Plafker, 2007). Findings further establish that to prevent loss of face, ABEs should restrain from criticizing employees in front of their peers. In addition, informants observed higher level of power distance among Chinese employees (Hofstede, 1980), such as a greater sensitivity to hierarchy, authority and titles.

The study confirmed that Chinese employees are eager to learn, can be extremely productive (Kynge, 2007) and that providing proper training is critical (Davidson, 1987). However, assertions about Chinese employees' positive responses to incentives could not be verified. Nonetheless, findings indicate that although Chinese employees can work very hard and are willing to do some overtime, they are not willing to work extremely long hours like Japanese employees. Their loyalty to a given employer was also reported as a strong concern of informants, which is consistent with the findings of Fernandez and Underwood (2007). In addition, the inquiry put light upon two key informant concerns. First, a strong consensus established that due to high risk aversion, fear of authority and fear of losing face, Chinese employees or contractors "can't say no" to any request,

whether competent to accomplish a task or not. This, in turn, calls for constant monitoring of work activities and negatively affects the degree of work adjustment. Moreover, an alleged lack of creativity, imagination, initiative and independent thinking among Chinese employees was reported by a majority of expatriates as having a negative influence over their degree of work adjustment. According to informants, these perceived shortfalls necessitate repetitive communication and ongoing verification of task accomplishment as nothing can ever be taken for granted in the Chinese work environment. This also requires reliance upon effective middle managers who currently are in short supply in China (Fernandez & Underwood, 2007).

A Difficult Business Culture

In addition to communication and management challenges, the overall Chinese business culture was identified as having a negative influence over informants' degree of work adjustment. A key antecedent associated with the phenomenon was the perceived callousness of Chinese business people and organizations. Participants' general impression was that the ultimate goal among Chinese business circles is to get rich as quickly as possible with the least amount of efforts and expenses. This is consistent with a culture which, according to participants, has traditionally emphasized "resource providing". Negative expressions such as "appalling", "lying", "copying", "stealing", "cheating" and "being used" were chosen to describe the Chinese business environment. Informants commented at large upon broken business deals, promises and contracts, failed joint-ventures, IPR infringements and other matters perceived as moral, ethical and commercial violations. They also provided numerous examples of IPR infringements

such as the prevalence of fake brands (i.e., Crest) and software applications. According to study participants, Chinese business circles will do whatever needed to lower their costs, underbid rivals, and win at any price. Such findings are consistent with literature findings which provide abundant examples of piracy and other cost-saving initiatives as well as Chinese emphasis on maintaining a strong price advantage over foreign competitors (Fernandez & Underwood, 2007; Kynge, 2007; Plafker, 2007).

As they did with regards to their degree of general adjustment, informants called attention to the fine boundaries between *guanxi* and corruption (Fernandez & Underwood, 2007; Plafker, 2007). The study highlighted the sharp cross-cultural contrast existing between the Chinese culture, which thinks in terms of face and shame and the American culture, which values Judeo-Christian concepts such as sin and guilt (De Mente, 2009; Gallo, 2008; C. Lee, 2003; Plafker, 2007).

Difficulties associated with contract enforcement challenges emerged from the study as a having a strongly negative influence over the degree of work adjustment. Informants commented at length upon such issues when describing the consequences resulting from the sudden withdrawal of Chinese partners once they acquired needed knowledge, technology or resources from a foreign entity. In addition, informants denounced a legal system perceived as stacked against expatriates and foreign companies.

Economic Rivalry

The inquiry identified awareness of economic rivalry as a factor having negative influence over informants' degree of work adjustment. Although as a group, informants

appeared reverential of China's impressive speed of transformation, they shared concerns about the perceived ethical and moral shortcuts that China is willing to employ to achieve her means. Participants commented that due to an ostensible lack of innovative and creative capacity, a large number of Chinese firms and individuals, with the tacit or explicit support of Chinese government, have utmost disregard for international copyright law, and go to great extents to "copy" or simply "steal" Western and American technologies. This is consistent with literature findings (Fernandez & Underwood, 2007; Jacques, 2009; Kynge, 2007; Plafker, 2007). While Plafker (2007) highlights China's long history of IPR infringement, Fernandez and Underwood (2007) report that as of 2005, 19 of 20 profiled MNC's had suffered from Chinese IPR infringement, while 90% of all software used in China was pirated.

Government Interference

The weight and omnipresence of governmental and bureaucratic interference emerged as factors having a negative influence over informants' degree of work adjustment as well. This too is consistent with Plafker who warns about underestimating the demands for respect and power acknowledgement expected by government officials. Gallo (2008) calls Chinese bureaucracy "incredible" (p. 126) and explains that Chinese bureaucrats are unwilling to acknowledge any request without first securing multiple approvals from their hierarchy. Regrettably, requests from foreigners are even more susceptible to added scrutiny and refusals. Fernandez and Underwood (2007) explain that much of the phenomenon is due to the fact that mid-level and senior bureaucrats grew up during or after the Chinese Cultural Revolution and owe their power to embracement of

communist ideology. In spite of a slight evolution in the bureaucratic mind, a chasm remains between administrative and business perspectives.

*Chinese Cultural Factors with a Negative Influence over the Degree of
Interactive Adjustment*

Communication challenges

In addition to affecting participants' degrees of general and work adjustment, study findings indicate that communication challenges related to lack of language fluency, language dissimilarity and language barriers have a negative impact upon the degree of adjustment pertaining to interaction with host nationals. Language barriers alone prevent expatriates and their families from functioning properly in their day to day environment. Informants further reported that language dissimilarity is not limited to mere differences between English and Mandarin; the construct includes gaps in sign languages. For example, a number expressed with fingers in one language does not necessarily correspond to the same number in the other language. Other aspects of communication such as body language, tone of voice, direct versus indirect expression, and linear versus contextual thinking were reported as being at play as well. This is once again consistent with literature findings (Björkman & Schaap, 1994; Black & Gregersen, 1991a, 1991b; De Mente, 2009; Fernandez & Underwood, 2007; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Gallo, 2008; Hullinger, 1995; C. Lee, 2003; McEnery & DesHarnais, 1990; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Plafker, 2007; Stone, 1991; Tadla, 2007; Triandis, 1994).

Building Rapport With Older Generations

Participants reported that establishing contact with younger Chinese citizens, those born after 1980, seems far easier than interacting with their older peers. For one thing, younger Chinese citizens seem eager to embrace Western trends such as drinking coffee, eating fast-food, watching Hollywood movies or listening to American music (De Mente, 2009). Gallo (2008) refers to the generation born after 1980 as *Ba Ling Hou* [Gen Y] and explains that this generation of young individuals is indeed more likely to embrace Western trends and values. However, in their day to day activities, ABEs must primarily interact with older citizens, and building rapport with them is not as easy.

Gaining Trust and Acceptance - The Dragon Flies Skimming The Water

The study uncovered a significant interactive adjustment constraint in the fact that even well-adjusted expatriates, and most particularly those who have reached bi-culturalism, felt like they will never be fully accepted as genuine members of the Chinese cultural community. A participant expressed his sadness when declaring: “You’ll never be fully adjusted here. You’re never gonna be fully accepted . . .” This is consistent with Taft’s (1977) identification of feelings of rejection from host nationals as a culture shock dimension. Findings also support those of Gallo (2008) who comments upon the difficulty of establishing close friendships in China as citizens fear “. . . being exposed in some way.” (p. 94).

Furthermore, some warned that in spite of all efforts, foreigners can never achieve full acculturation as they will never be fully accepted or trusted by Chinese society. This

is once again consistent with the feelings of rejection from host nationals identified by Taft (1977) as a culture shock dimension.

Implications for Organizations

Findings confirm the close association existing between expatriate (and family) selection and CCT and support processes in minimizing the effects of culture shock, and enhancing prompt and effective adjustment. The three dimensions should be considered holistically for any missing aspect will weaken odds of expatriate mission success.

Expatriate Selection

Although the study researched factors affecting the three established degrees of sociocultural adjustment as opposed to psychological adjustment, findings indirectly support literature prescriptions about some of the psychological attributes of strong expatriate candidates. First, results demonstrate that informants were indeed exposed to culture shock, and most particularly the crisis phase of that phenomenon. Second, results further indicate that a broad array of Chinese cultural factors did negatively affect informants' degrees of general, work and interactive adjustment. These factors led to disorientation, frustrations and, at times, hostility, depression and disintegration. In other words, psychological and socio-cultural forms of adjustment are closely intertwined (Berry, 2006; Searle & Ward, 1991; Selmer, 2005a; Ward & Kennedy, 1996). Negative external factors such as the ones identified in the Chinese cultural milieu trigger psychological stimuli (e.g., stress, frustrations), which in turn affect an expatriate's

general, work and/or interactive forms of adjustment. Selected candidates must thus possess an ability to cope with crisis and frustrations as study informants demonstrated. This, in turn, implies possession of personal characteristics such as self-awareness, curiosity, empathy, willingness to learn, risk tolerance, mental flexibility, emotional resilience and humility (Black, 1990; Caligiuri, 2000; Church, 1982; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Stone, 1991). Hence, organizationally, informants' testimonies bear particular significance with regards to the selection of candidates considered for Chinese missions, and the design of training and support programs. Particular attention must be given to psychological dimensions.

Moreover, study results clearly demonstrate the importance of previous expatriate experience in overcoming culture shock and coping with local cultural factors having a negative adjustment influence. Regardless of the length of their Chinese sojourn, informants stressed the importance of prior cross-cultural experience in enhancing adjustment efforts. Informants gained previous experience in numerous ways such as learning Mandarin in China as high-school or college students, coming on their own to try their chance until finding the right opportunity, working for different employers having expatriate needs in China, or working as expatriates in other countries before deployment to China. Whenever possible, reference should be given to candidates with previous expatriation experience as recommended by Caligiuri (2000).

Cross-cultural Training & Preparation

Results confirm that cross-cultural adjustment is a gradual and complex phenomenon, which can never be taken for granted. In addition to rigorous screening of

candidates and dependents, organizations should provide meaningful pre and post-departure CCT, with particular emphasis upon language and communication skills.

Results clearly demonstrate the critical role played by language skills and other aspects of communication over the three degrees of socio-cultural adjustment explored in this study. Once individuals with needed psychological and cross-cultural predispositions have been identified, preference should be given to those speaking Mandarin or actively involved in its learning. In addition, considering the reported complexity of China's main language, organizations should provide both employees and their dependants with on-going language training throughout a given assignment. Nevertheless, study findings indicate that language only represents a small aspect of the communication challenges encountered by ABEs working in mainland China. To prove effective, training should address all communication aspects (i.e.; patterns of reasoning, communication styles, body language, tone of voice, importance of subtleties, etc.) as Chinese culture is primarily wholistic and contextual. Acquiring such communication skills will maximize expatriates' ability to cope with a challenging cultural environment.

Further, to prove effectual, CCT should not merely highlight the numerous differences existing between Chinese and American cultures; it should allow expatriation candidates to gain a deep understanding of and possible respect for the numerous historical, political, socio-economic factors that, over millennia, have shaped Chinese culture. In other words, training emphasis should consider the *why* dimension of cross-cultural differences as opposed to the *what*. Proper CCT should also consider the cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects of the cultural adaptation phenomenon (Copeland & Griggs, 1985; Kohls, 1979; Winkelman, 1994).

In addition, relevant CCT should equip expatriates and their dependents with stronger relational skills, while providing proven stress-reduction and culture shock coping strategies, such as the one proposed by Winkelman (1994) who suggests: “. . . a proactive cognitive orientation. An analytical approach that anticipates particular personal conflicts, determines conflict causes, and implements problem-resolution processes . . .” (p. 125).

Last, to be truly valuable, CCT should not be limited to prior-departure; on-going training should be dispensed during mission deployment as training occurring during immersion in the Chinese cultural environment may prove more contextually relevant.

On-going, In-country Support

The proven complexity of the Chinese cultural environment requires corporate headquarters to provide ongoing support to ABEs and their families. Efforts should be made to monitor adaptive progress throughout deployment; most particularly in early stages. Lastly, expatriates and their dependents should be provided with easy access to therapeutic counseling; especially during the crisis phase of culture shock.

Implications for Potential Expatriates

Participants identified in the Chinese cultural milieu a broad array of factors leading to culture shock and having a negative impact upon their degree of general, work and interactive adjustment. Although all informants did effectively adjust or even acculturated to that environment, they reported that effective cross-cultural adjustment is

a gradual, complicated and lengthy process requiring a mix of psychological, behavioral and professional skills. Important attributes include strong language and communication skills, professional competence, self-orientation, mental flexibility, willingness to learn and adapt, empathy, respect for self and others, patience, perseverance, cultural toughness, resilience and humility. The process also requires constant work and attention as one is always at the mercy of a cultural faux-pas.

Expatriation is an exciting but perilous endeavor. Results clearly support previous literature findings about the numerous challenges awaiting expatriates sent to mainland China (Fernandez & Underwood, 2007; Plafker, 2008). Professionals considering expatriation assignments to mainland China should carefully assess whether they possess the panoply of needed skills. They should also obtain strong family and organizational backing as failure to do so could bear negative personal and professional consequences.

Theoretical Implications

Study contributions to the literature are the following. First, findings further support the long-debated linkage of culture shock and U-Curve theoretical perspectives. Second, the study identified existence of a nostalgic phase affecting well-acculturated individuals, who after reaching bi-culturalism wrestle with second thoughts, and start questioning the worthiness of their cross-cultural journey. This phase is worthy of additional research as the literature has essentially focused upon the four stages of the U-Curve model, or the re-entry phase presented in the W-Curve model, while overlooking this dimension. Third, the study did identify in the Chinese cultural milieu a series of

factors leading to the culture shock of informants, and having a negative impact on three degrees of socio-cultural adjustment. Fourth, the study supports the emic or insider's view of qualitative research, which contends that a primary purpose of naturalistic inquiries is to comprehend a phenomenon under investigation from the participants' perspectives (Merriam, 1988; Weick, 1995). By willingly sharing their views, thoughts, feelings, beliefs and experiences, informants described their social and work realities. This brought additional light upon researched phenomena. In addition, the emphasis placed upon inductive processes to gain meaning and understanding yielded rich, thick, descriptive and contextually-situated data. This allowed the researcher to gain deeper comprehension of Chinese cultural factors having a negative impact upon informants' degree of in-country adjustment (Merriam, 1988). As a result, the richness of findings uncovered in the study is consistent with the one resulting from parallel cross-cultural qualitative inquiries (Björkman & Schaap, 1994; Davidson, 1987; Goodall et al., 2006/2007; Hullinger, 1995; Osgathorp Smith, 1993; Sergeant & Frenkel, 1988). Last, the study confirmed the value of CMC methodologies in conducting global research.

Study Limitations

This study is subject to several limitations.

1. Study findings pertain to a qualitative inquiry relying upon a small (n=14) sample of ABEs working in mainland China. This negatively affects the transferability and generalizability of data.

2. The study was limited to a panel of American business expatriates. Other types of American expatriates (e.g., students, teachers or diplomats) could have very different perceptions of studied phenomena.
3. Informants were primarily male; only one respondent was a female expatriate. Again, a panel primarily constituted of female informants might lead to different results.
4. The 14 participants were located in mainland China. Findings may vary for other parts of Greater China such as Taiwan or Hong Kong.
5. Informants were located in four large Chinese urban centers. Interviewing ABEs situated in rural or smaller urban centers could generate dissimilar findings.
6. The study did not consider how spousal influence might affect the three researched degrees of socio-cultural adjustment.
7. The research relied upon CMC methodologies and phone interviews. In-person interviews could have prompted informants to disclose additional or slightly different data. This too may affect the transferability of results.
8. Study findings are ethnocentric and do not consider the perspectives of host nationals.

Suggestions for Further Research

Exploring the Chinese cultural environment to identify in that milieu factors having a negative effect upon informants their degree of general, work and interactive adjustment has proven to be a worthy endeavor. The process generated rich, descriptive, relevant and contextually-situated data making a small contribution to the literature on

expatriation and cross-cultural communication; most particularly to culture shock and U-Curve literature. These qualitative findings not only add to those generated by numerous quantitative inquiries; they prepare the ground for additional inquiries on researched constructs, as well (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990).

Considering both the paucity of qualitative research on the factors and conditions associated with the cross-cultural adjustment of American business expatriates working in mainland China, and the richness of data uncovered through this investigation, additional inquiries of the phenomenon are strongly recommended. Descriptive and explanatory inquiries could prove of particular interest. Additionally, quantitative studies could seek potential generalizability of study findings through surveying of larger ABE samples. Regardless of research methodology, study findings suggest additional fields of inquiry, such as the following ones:

(a) This study is by no means exhaustive. Additional exploratory research could be conducted to uncover in the Chinese cultural milieu additional factors having a negative influence over ABEs' general, work or interactive degrees of adjustment. Focus upon and deeper exploration of each of the three constructs would bring needed depth to this investigation.

(b) Case study research could attempt to describe or explain how uncovered factors (e.g.; communication challenges, government influence, etc.) affect ABEs in their work environment, general environment or interaction with Chinese nationals.

(c) Additional inquiries could thus explore the Chinese cultural environment to identify factors having a negative influence over female ABEs' degree of socio-cultural adjustment.

(d) Likewise, a comparative study could explore and contrast the general, work and interactive adjustment of male and female ABEs working in mainland China.

(e) Considering the crucial role played by dependents in sociocultural adjustment, other inquiries could explore the Chinese cultural milieu to identify factors having a negative influence over dependents' degree of general or interactive adjustment.

(f) Study informants were located in four major Chinese urban centers. Similar research should investigate the perceptions of ABEs working in rural areas or smaller urban environments.

(g) Comparing the perceptions of ABEs and Chinese nationals on the phenomena uncovered in this study might prove of value as well by off-setting the study's inherent ethnocentrism.

(h) The generalizability of study findings should be quantitatively tested upon larger population samples.

(i) The nostalgic phase of cross-cultural adjustment, uncovered in this inquiry seems worthy of further research. Additional inquiries should explore the phenomenon on a greater scale to assess its amplitude among acculturated expatriates.

Summary

Strong, experienced, culturally-sensitive, well-adjusted and thus effective expatriates are essential to the growth of MNCs. Today, China represents both the world's leading expatriation market and a hardship country that prompts countless expatriation candidates to refuse postings to that country.

Key to successful expatriation is the effective socio-cultural adjustment of both expatriates and their dependants. Such effectiveness requires selection of the right candidates; candidates with proven professional competences, specific psychological characteristics, and a strong ability to adjust to complex and challenging cross-cultural environments. Some of the most common psychological and socio-cultural aptitudes attributed to successful expatriates being: linguistic abilities, avid curiosity, willingness to learn, strong listening skills, self-awareness, emotional resilience, mental flexibility, risk tolerance; humbleness, cultural empathy, strong personal morality, sense of humor, and action orientation (Black, 1990; Black & Gregersen, 1991a; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black & Porter, 1991; Caligiuri, 2000; Church, 1982; Harris & Kumra, 2000; Hawes & Kealey, 1981; Holopainen & Björkman, 2005; Kelley & Meyers, 1999; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1999; Stone, 1991; Tung, 1987, 1998; Wills & Barham, 1994). In addition to these endogenous factors, exogenous factors such as prior deployment experience, strong family and corporate support, and effective CCT have been emphasized as well.

However, because China is a land of complex cultural norms, roles, values, symbols and paradoxes developed over a long and rich history, even well-selected ABEs often wrestle with significant cross-cultural communication challenges resulting from cultural distance. The impact that significant gaps in PDI, IDV, UAI and LTO have had in distancing Chinese and American cultures, has long been established (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). At an individual level, the effects that differences in communication patterns, management styles, approaches to conducting business and enforcing contracts have had upon cultural distance have been highlighted as well. Nevertheless, in spite of

an abundant expatriation literature, there exists a paucity of research about the specific Chinese cultural factors that lead to the culture shock of ABEs and have a negative influence upon their general, work and interactive degrees of socio-cultural adjustment.

Through semi-guided, in-depth interviews with a panel of 14 ABE informants, this study explored the Chinese cultural milieu to identify some of these factors. Findings make several contributions to the literature.

First, findings indicate that participants had indeed been exposed to the culture shock phenomenon. Second, results confirm a strong association between the culture shock and U-Curve theoretical perspectives. This brings a needed contribution to culture shock and U-Curve literatures.

Moreover, study findings indicate that fully-aculturated individuals may be negatively affected by a phase of adjustment unreported in literature associated with the U or W-Curve models of adjustment. The phase seems characterized by self-doubt, second thoughts and feelings prompting highly-experienced expatriates to reconsider the worthiness of their career path and length of foreign sojourn. I refer to this phase as nostalgia, and deem it worthy of additional research.

In addition, the study did uncover a broad array of Chinese cultural factors negatively affecting informants' degrees of general, work and interactive socio-cultural adjustment. Factors having a negative impact upon the general degree of socio-cultural adjustment encompass: (a) multiple communication challenges; (b) the cultural complexity and numerous layers of Chinese society; (c) conflicting time orientations; (d) latent chauvinism and xenophobic tendencies; (e) perceived moral and ethical flexibility;

(f) government and bureaucratic interference; and, (g) negative socio-cultural, economic infrastructure and environmental conditions.

Factors having a negative influence upon the work degree of socio-cultural adjustment include a broad array of management challenges including: (a) management-specific communication issues; (b) working in a difficulty business culture; and, (c) a sense of on-going economic rivalry.

Factors bearing a negative effect upon the interactive or relational degree of socio-cultural adjustment comprise: (a) communication challenges, (b) the formality of the Chinese socio-cultural environment; (c) difficulties in gaining trust and acceptance; and, (d) hurdles in building rapport with older Chinese generations.

Such results reinforce the importance of external or socio-cultural factors as influencers of adjustment in a field long dominated by references to psychological and behavioral perspectives.

Once proper candidates have been selected, they must be provided with meaningful and ongoing CCT. Training related to language and other communication skills is paramount and should represent a key aspect of CCT. Moreover, although pre-departure training is significant, particular emphasis should be placed upon post-departure training as it is contextual and more likely to help individuals in their adaptive efforts. However, pre and post-departure forms of CCT, will not suffice, as they must parallel genuine and continuous corporate support; support that demonstrates headquarters' understanding of cross-cultural challenges and realities. Corporate support should also include access to therapeutic counseling if or whenever needed.

In view of the tremendous hard and soft costs associated with failed expatriation assignments, MNCs with Chinese operations should find value in this study by gaining early awareness of Chinese cultural antecedents having a negative influence over expatriates' adjustment. Such knowledge could provide additional guidance in developing appropriate expatriate selection, training and support strategies.

Expatriates and their families too should find value in the research by developing strategies to minimize their culture shock and accelerate their adaptation to the Chinese cultural milieu.

Finally, it seems appropriate for an exploratory study that placed so much emphasis on listening to American business expatriates and their stories, to conclude the research with an informant quote that appropriately summarizes study findings: “. . . it is not an easy assignment, but if you can bend with the [cultural] wind and not break, you will be fine in China . . .”

Appendix A – Informed Consent

George Fox University

414 N. Meridian St.
Newberg, OR 97132

<http://www.georgefox.edu>

Informed Consent Document

Dear Study Participant,

We ask that you read this document and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the intended study.

Doctoral Research Title:

“Research on the culture shock and sociocultural adjustment of American business expatriates in the People’s Republic of China: an exploratory study”.

Project overview:

In this qualitative exploratory study, the researcher will conduct phone interviews with a panel (10 or 12 participants) of American expatriates working in mainland China to investigate some of the dimensions associated with their cross-cultural adjustment, while working in the PRC.

Procedure:

- Before the interview, participants will be provided with a semi-structured questionnaire, via e-mail.
- The researcher will then call the participant at a pre-arranged and convenient time to conduct a phone interview.
- Interviews will be recorded by the researcher for the sole purpose of transcribing and analyzing the data.
- Interviews will be strictly CONFIDENTIAL and no part of participants’ identity other than their first name will be mentioned during the interview.
- The expected duration of the interview is 25 to 35 minutes.
- The interview will be conducted throughout November & December, 2010.
- A shorter (10 to 15-minute) follow up interview could occur in December or January to refine or clarify initial findings.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has the following risks: NONE, if the guidelines and agreements for the study are followed by the researcher.

The study has the following benefits: a summary of study findings will be provided to all participants. Participants will also be allowed to share findings with their organization if they so decide.

Confidentiality:

To ensure utmost confidentiality, participants will not be asked to disclose their name or the name of their organization during the interview process. Individuals who participate in the study will not be identified by their last name, their company name or in any other way unless they agree in writing.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

Alain Gracianette, Doctoral Student. 2485 Tipperary Court, West Linn, OR 97068. (503) 699-6279. agracianette06@georgefox.edu OR agracianette@marylhurst.edu

Dr. Craig Johnson, Director of the Doctor of Business Administration program, George Fox University, 414 N Meridian Street, Newberg, OR 97132. Telephone: (503) 554-2819. E-mail: cjohnson@georgefox.edu

You may ask any questions you have now. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Participant's Electronic Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Electronic Signature: __Alain Gracianette_____ Date: 04/11/2011

Appendix B – Revised Interview Guide

IMPORTANT NOTE: To ensure confidentiality, the name of informants' names and name of their organization were not be asked or recorded.

PART 1 – 10 in-depth questions

1. How would you describe your experience living and working in China?
2. How would you describe Chinese culture in general?
3. How would you describe interaction with Chinese people in general?
4. What about work interaction?
5. How would you describe your level of adjustment to the Chinese culture?
6. How would you describe the adjustment process?
7. In your mind, what differentiates expatriates who effectively adjust to living in China and those who don't?
8. What are some of the differences between your expectations and what you have experienced?
9. Overall, what would you say are the greatest acculturation challenges to American expatriates working in China?
10. Can you think of specific Chinese cultural antecedents affecting the adjustment of American expatriates?

PART 2 – 7 demographic questions

11. What is your age?
12. How long have you lived and worked as an expatriate in China?
13. Is it your first assignment in China? If not, how many assignments did you have in China prior to this one? How long were the assignments?

14. Are you single or married? If married, does your family live with you in China?
15. Do you speak Mandarin? If not, are you learning or have you tried to learn Mandarin?
16. How long do you plan on staying in China? Would you consider another assignment?
17. Do you have any additional comments or observations?

Appendix C – Original Interview Guide

IMPORTANT NOTE: To ensure confidentiality, the name of informants' names and name of their organization were not be asked or recorded.

PART 1 – 11 in-depth questions

1. How would you describe your experience living and working in China?
2. How would you describe Chinese culture in general?
3. How would you describe interaction with Chinese people in general?
4. What about work interaction?
5. How would you describe your level of adjustment to the Chinese culture?
6. How would you describe the adjustment process?
7. In your mind, what differentiates expatriates who effectively adjust to living in China and those who don't?
8. What are some of the differences between your expectations and what you have experienced?
9. Overall, what would you say are the greatest acculturation challenges to American expatriates working in China?
10. How long do you plan on staying in China? Would you consider another assignment?
11. Do you have any additional comments?

PART 2 – 5 demographic questions

12. How long have you lived and worked as an expatriate in China?
13. Is it your first assignment in China? If not, how many assignments did you have in China prior to this one? How long were the assignments?

14. What is your age?

15. Are you single or married? If married, does your family live with you in
China?

16. Do you speak Mandarin? If not, are you learning or have you tried to learn
Mandarin?

REFERENCES

- Adelman, M. B. (1988). Cross-cultural adjustment: A theoretical perspective on social support. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 12(3), 183-204.
- Adler, N. J. (1981). Reentry: Managing cross-cultural transitions. *Group & Organizations Studies*, 6, 341-356.
- Adler, N. J. (1984a). Expecting international success: Female managers overseas. *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 19, 79-85.
- Adler, N. J. (1984b). Women do not want international careers: And other myths about international management. *Organizational Dynamics*, 13, 66-79.
- Adler, N. J. (1986). A portable life: The expatriate spouse. *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*. Kent, Massachusetts.
- Adler, N. J. (1987). Pacific basin managers: A Gaijin, not a woman. *Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26, 169-192.
- Adler, N. J. (1993). Competitive frontiers: Women managers in the triad. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 23, 3-23.
- Adler, N. J. (1994). Competitive frontiers: Women managing across borders. *Journal of Management Development*, 13(2), 22-41.
- Adler, N. J. (2002). *International dimensions of organizational behavior*. Cincinnati, OH: Thompson-Southwestern.
- Adler, P. S. (1975). The transitional experience: An alternative view of cultural shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 15(4), 13-23.

- Aikman, D. (2003). *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is transforming China and changing the global balance of power*. Regnery Publishing.
- American Psychological Association (2001). Ethical Standards for the reporting and publishing of scientific information. *Publication Manual*.
- Anderson, L. E. (1994). A new look at an old construct: Cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 18, 293 - 328.
- Andreason, A. W. (2008). Expatriate adjustment of spouses and expatriate managers: An integrative research review. *International Journal of Management*, 25(2), 382-395.
- American Psychological Association (2001). *Ethical standards for the reporting and publishing of scientific information. The publication manual of the American Psychological Association. Fifth Edition*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Arends-Tóth, J., & Van de Vijver, F. J. R. (2007). Acculturation attitudes: A comparison of measurement methods. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 37, 1462-1488.
- Ashamalla, M. S. (1998). International human resources management practices: The challenge of expatriation. *Competitive Review*, 8(2), 54-65.
- Aycan, Z. (1997). Expatriate adjustment as a multifaceted phenomenon: Individual and organizational level predictors. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 8(4), 434-456.
- Aycan, Z., & Kanungo, R. N. (1997). *Current issues and future challenges in expatriate management*. Greenwich, Connecticut: AI Press.

- Barboza, D. (August 15, 2010). China passes Japan as second-largest economy. *The New York Times*. Retrieved April 2, 2011 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/16/business/global/16yuan.html>
- Bardo, J. W., & Bardo, D. J. (1981). American migrants in Australia: An exploratory study of adjustment. *Sociological Focus*, 14(2), 147-156.
- Barham, K., & Devine, M. (1991). *The Quest for the International Manager: A Survey of Global Human Resource Strategies*. London: Ashridge Management Guide/Economist Intelligence Unit.
- Baruch, Y., & Altman, Y. (2002). Expatriation and repatriation in MNC: A taxonomy. *Human Resource Management*, 41(2), 239-259.
- Befus, C. P. (1988). A multilevel treatment approach for culture shock experienced by sojourners. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 12, 381-400.
- Bennett, J. (1977). Transition shock: Putting culture shock in perspective. *International & Intercultural Communication Annual*, 4, 45-52.
- Bennett, M. J. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10(2), 179-196.
- Berardo, K. (2006). *The U-curve of Adjustment: A study in the evolution and evaluation of a 50-year old model*. Bedfordshire, UK, Luton Business School: University of Bedfordshire.
- Berry, J. W. (1970). Marginality, stress, and ethnic identification in an acculturated Aboriginal community. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 1, 239-252.
- Berry, J. W. (1980). *Acculturation as varieties of adaptation. Acculturation: Theory, models, and findings*. A. Padilla. Boulder, CO: Westview, 9-25.

- Berry, J. W. (1990). Comparative studies of acculturative stress. *International Migration Review, 21*, 491-511.
- Berry, J. W. (1994). *Acculturation and psychological adaptation. Journeys into cross-cultural psychology*. A. M. Bouvy, F. J. R. v. d. Vivjer, P. Boski, & P. Schmitz. Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 129-141.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Lead Article: Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 46*(1), 5-34.
- Berry, J. W. (2001). A psychology of immigration. *International Journal of Social Issues, 57*, 615-631.
- Berry, J. W. (2006). Acculturation: A conceptual overview. In M. H. Bornstein & L. R. Cote (Eds.), *Acculturation and parent-child relationships: Measurement and development*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Berry, J. W., & Annis, R. C. (1974). Acculturative stress: The role of ecology, culture and differentiation. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology 5*, 382-406.
- Berry, J. W., & Kim, U. (1988). Acculturation and mental health. *Health and cross-cultural psychology: Toward applications*. (207-238). P. R. Dasen, J. W. Berry and N. Sartorius (Eds.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Berry, J., Kim, U., & Boski, P. (1987). Psychological acculturation of immigrants. In Y. Y. Kim & W. Gudykunst (Eds.), *Cross-cultural adaptation: Current approaches*. (62-89). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Berry, J. W., U. Kim, & Boski, P. (1988). *Psychological acculturation of immigrants. Cross-cultural adaptation: Current approaches*. Y. Y. Kim, & W. B. Gudykunst. Newbury Park, CA: Sage: 62-89.

- Berry, J. W., Kim, U., Minde, T. & Mok, D. (1987). Comparative studies of acculturative stress. *International Migration Review*, 21, 491-511.
- Berry, J. W., Kim, U., Power, S., Young, M. and Bujaki, M. (1989). Acculturation attitudes in plural societies. *Applied Psychology*, 38, 185-206.
- Berry, J. W., & Sam, D. L. (1997). Acculturation and adaptation. *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology: Social behavior and applications*. J. W. Berry, M. H. Segall, & C. Kagitcibasi. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 3, 314-317.
- Berry, J. W., & Ward, C. (2006). Commentary on redefining interactions across cultures and organizations. *Group & Organization Management*, 31(1), 64-77.
- Bhagat, R. S., & Prien, K. O. (1996). Cross-cultural training in organizational contexts. *Handbook of intercultural training*. D. Landis, & R. S. Bhagat. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 216-230.
- Bhaskar-Shrinivas, P., Harrison, D. A., Shaffer, M. A., & Luk, D. M. (2005). Input-based and time-based models of international adjustment: Meta-analytic evidence and theoretical extensions. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(2), 257-281.
- Bhawuk, D. P. S. (1998). The role of culture theory in cross-cultural training. A multi-method study of culture-specific, culture-general, and culture theory-based assimilators. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 29(5), 630-655.
- Bhawuk, D. P., & Brislin, R. W. (2000). Cross-cultural training: A review. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 49, 162-191.
- Bird, A. (2001). International assignments and careers as repositories of knowledge. *Developing global business leaders: Policies, processes, and innovations*. M. Mendenhall, T. M. Kuhlmann, & G. Stahl. Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 19-36.

- Bird, A., & Mukuda, M. (1989). Expatriates in their own home: A new twist in the human resource management strategies of Japanese MNCs. *Human Resource Management, 28*(4), 437-453.
- Birdseye, M. G., & Hill, J. S. (1995). Individual, organizational/work and environmental influences on expatriate turnover tendencies: An empirical study. *Journal of International Business Studies, 26*(4), 787-813.
- Björkman, I. (1994). Role perception and behavior among Chinese managers in Sino-Western joint venture. *Advances in Chinese industrial studies*. S. Stewart. Greenwich, CT, JAI Press.
- Björkman, I., & Schaap, A. (1994). Outsiders in the Middle Kingdom: expatriate managers in Chinese-Western joint ventures. *European Management Journal, 12*(2), 147-153.
- Black, J. S. (1988). Work role transitions: a study of American expatriate managers in Japan. *Journal of International Business Studies, 30*(2), 119-134.
- Black, J. S. (1990). The relationship of personal characteristics with adjustment of Japanese expatriate managers. *Management International Review, 30*, 119-134.
- Black, J. S., & Gregersen, H. B. (1991a). Antecedents to cross-cultural adjustment for expatriates in Pacific Rim assignments. *Human Relations, 44*(5), 497-515.
- Black, J. S., & Gregersen, H. B. (1991b). The other half of the picture: Antecedents of spouse cultural adjustment. *Journal of International Business Studies, 22*(3), 461-477.

- Black, J. S., & Gregersen, H. B. (1991c). When Yankee comes home. Factors related to expatriate and spouse repatriation adjustment. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 22(1), 671-694.
- Black, J. S., & Gregersen, H. B. (1999). The right way to manage expatriates. *Harvard Business Review*, 77, 52-62.
- Black, J. S., & Gregersen, H. B., & Mendenhall, M. E. (1992). *Global assignments: Successfully expatriating and repatriating international managers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Black, J. S., & Gregersen, H. B., Mendenhall, M. E., & Stroh, L. K. (1999). *Globalising people through international assignments*. New York: Addison-Wesley/Longman.
- Black, J. S., & Mendenhall, M. E. (1990). Cross-cultural training effectiveness: A review of theoretical framework for future research. *Academy of Management Review*, 15(1), 113-136.
- Black, J. S., Mendenhall, M. E., & Oddou, G. (April, 1991). Toward a comprehensive model of international adjustment: An integration of multiple theoretical perspectives. *Academy of Management Review*, 16(2), 291-317.
- Black, J. S., & Porter, L. W. (1991). Managerial behaviors and job performance: A successful manager in Los Angeles may not succeed in Hong Kong. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 22(1), 99-113.
- Black, J. S., & Stephens G. K. (1989). The influence of spouse on American expatriate adjustment and intent to stay in Pacific Rim overseas assignments. *Journal of Management*, 15(4), 529-544.

- Blake, B. F., Heslin, R., & Curtis, S. C. (1996). Measuring impacts of cross-cultural training. In Landis, D. & Bhakat, R. (Eds.) *Handbook of intercultural training* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 165-182.
- Bock, P. K., ed. (1970). *Culture shock: A reader in modern cultural anthropology*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Bonache, J., & Brewster, C. (2001). *Knowledge transfer and the management of expatriation: People in a multinational context*. London: Thomson Learning.
- Borg, W. R., & Gall, M. D. (1989). *Educational research*. New York: Longman.
- Boyacigiller, N. (1991). *The international assignment reconsidered*. *International Human Resource Management*. G. R. Mendenhall M. E. & Oddou. Boston, MA: PWS-Kent, 148-155.
- Brett, J. M., & Stroh, L. K. (1995). Willingness to relocate internationally. *Human Resource Management*, 34(3), 405-424.
- Brewster, C. (1988). *The management of expatriates*. Bedford, United Kingdom: Cranfield Institute of Technology.
- Brewster, C. (1991). *The management of expatriates*. London: Kogan Page.
- Brewster, C., & Pickard, J. (1994). Evaluating expatriate training. *International Studies of Management and Organisation*, 3, 18-35.
- Briggs, N. E., & Hardwood, G. R. (1982). Training personnel in multinational businesses: an inoculation approach. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 6, 341-354.
- Brislin, R. (1990). *Applied cross-cultural psychology*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Brislin, R. (1993). *Understanding culture's influence on behaviour*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Brislin, R, Cushner, C, Cherrie, C., & Yong, M. (1986). *Intercultural interactions: A practical guide*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publication.
- Brown, H. D. (1980). The optimal distance model of second language acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*, 14, 157-164.
- Buckley Ebrey, P. (1993). *Chinese civilization: A sourcebook*. New York: The Free Press.
- Buckley Ebrey, P. (1996). *China*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Buttery, E. A., & Wong, Y. H. (1999). The development of a Guanxi framework. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 17(3), 147.
- Caligiuri, P. M. (2000a). Selecting expatriates for personality characteristics: A moderating effect of personality on the relationship between host national contact and cross-cultural adjustment. *Management International Review*, 40, 61-80.
- Caligiuri, P. M. (2000b). The Big Five personality characteristics as predictors of expatriate's desire to terminate the assignment and supervisor-rated performance. *Personnel Psychology*, 53, 67-88.
- Caligiuri, P. M., & Cascio, W. (1998). Can we send her there? Maximizing the success of western women on global assignments. *Journal of World Business*, 33(4), 394-416.
- Caligiuri, P. M., & Di Santo, V. (2001). Global competence: What is it, and can it be developed through global assignments? *Human Resource Planning*, 24(3), 27-35.

- Caligiuri, P. M., Joshi, A., & Lazarova, M. (1999). Factors influencing the adjustment of women on global assignments. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 10*(2), 163-179.
- Caligiuri, P. M., & Phillips, J. M. (2003). An application of self-assessment realistic job previews to expatriate assignments. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 14*(7), 1102-1116.
- Caligiuri, P. M., & Tung, R. L. (1999). Comparing the success of male and female expatriates from a US-based multinational company. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 10*, 763-782.
- Campbell, D. T. (1974, Aug-Sept). *Quantitative knowing in action research*. Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, New Orleans.
- Carpenter, M., Sanders, G., & Gregersen, H., (2000). International assignment experience at the top can make a bottom-line difference. *Human Resource Management, 39*, 277-285.
- Caudron, S. (1991). Training ensures success overseas. *Personal Journal, 70*(10), 27-30.
- Chataway, C. J., & Berry, J. W. (1989). Acculturation experiences, appraisal, coping and adaptation: A comparison of Hong Kong Chinese, French and English students in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science 21*, 295-301.
- Chen, X. (2009). China is already capable of solving the three dimensional rural problem. *Governing rapid growth in China: Equity and institutions*. R. Kanbur, & X. Zhang. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Cherrier, H. (2005), Becoming Sensitive to Ethical Consumption Behavior: Narratives of Survival in an Uncertain and Unpredictable. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 32, 600-604.
- Church, A. T. (1982). Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 91, 540-572.
- CIA (2011). The World Factbook. China: Economy. Overview. Retrieved 06/26/2011 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook>.
- CIA (2011). The World Factbook. China: Economy. GDP composition by sector. Retrieved 06/26/2011 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>
- CIA (2011). The World Factbook. China: Economy. GDP (purchasing power parity). Retrieved 06/26/2011 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>
- CIA (2011). The World Factbook. China: Economy. GDP per capita. Retrieved 06/26/2011 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>
- CIA (2011). The World Factbook. China: Economy. Stock of direct foreign investment – home and abroad. Retrieved 06/26/2011 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>
- CIA (2011). The World Factbook. China: People. Ethnic Groups. Retrieved 06/26/2011 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>
- CIA (2011). The World Factbook. China: People. Languages. Retrieved 06/26/2011 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>

- CIA (2011). The World Factbook. China: People. Population. Retrieved 06/26/2011 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook>.
- Clark, P. (2008). *The chinese cultural revolution: A history* (Paperback). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Copeland, L., & Griggs, L. (1985). *Going international: How to make friends and deal effectively in the global marketplace*. New York: Random House.
- Cornell (2010). Anxiety. Glossary. Retrieved 01/21/10, 2010, from <http://www.cornellurology.com/glossary.shtml>.
- Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design; Choosing Among Five Traditions*. London, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 372 p. + notes, index.
- Cui, G., & Awa, J. E. (1992). Measuring intercultural effectiveness: An integrating approach. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 13, 287-302.
- Culpan, R., & Culpan, O. (1993). American and European expatriate managers: An empirical investigation. *The International Executive*, (1986-1998), 35(5), 431.
- Dahl, S. (2004). *Intercultural research: The current state of knowledge*. Middlesex University Discussion Paper 26.
- Daniels, J. D., & Insch, G. S. (1998). Why are early departure rates from foreign assignments lower than historically reported? *Multinational Business Review*, 6, 13-23.

- Davidson, W. (1987). Creating and managing joint ventures in China. *California Management Review*, 29, 77-94.
- De Mente, B. L. (2009). *The Chinese mind: Understanding traditional Chinese beliefs and their influence on contemporary culture* (Paperback). North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). *Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Downes, M. A., & Thomas, A. S. (1999). Managing overseas assignments to build organizational knowledge. *Human Resource Planning*, 22(4), 33–48.
- Downes, M. A., & Thomas, A. S. (2000). Knowledge transfer through expatriation: The U-curve approach to overseas staffing. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 12(2), 131-149.
- Erbacher, D., D'Netto, B., & España, J. (2006). Expatriate success in China: Impact of personal and situational factors. *Journal of American Academy of Business, Cambridge*, 9(2), 183-188.
- Eschbach, D. M., Parker, G. E., & Stoeberl, P. A. (2001). American repatriate employees' retrospective assessments of the effects of cross-cultural training on their adaptation to international assignments. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 12(2), 270-287.

- Evans, R. (1993). *Deng Xiaoping and the making of modern China*. New York: The Penguin Group.
- Feldman, D. C., & Thompson, H. B. (1993). Entry shock, culture shock: Socializing the new breed of global managers. *Human Resource Management, 31*, 345-362.
- Fernandez, J. A., & Underwood, L. (2007). *China CEO: A Case Guide for Business Leaders in China* [Paperback]. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Fisher, G. B., & Härtel, C. E. J. (2003). Cross-cultural effectiveness of Western expatriate-Thai client interactions: Lessons learned for IHRM research and theory. *Cross-Cultural Management: An International Journal, 10*, 3-28.
- Forster, N. (1997). The persistent myth of high expatriate failure rates: A reappraisal. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 8*, 414-433.
- Franke, R. H., Hofstede, G. & Bond, M. H. (1991). Cultural roots of economic performance: A research note. *Strategic Management Journal, 12*(4), 165-173.
- Furnham, A. (1988). *The adjustment of sojourners*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Furnham, A., & Bochner, S. (1986). *Culture shock: Psychological reactions to unfamiliar environments*. London: Methuen Press.
- Gabel, M., & Bruner, S. (2003). *Globalinc: An atlas of the multinational corporation*. New York: The New Press.
- Gallo, F. (2008). *Business leadership in China: How to blend best Western practices with Chinese wisdom*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Gao, G., & Gudykunst, W. B. (1990). Uncertainty, anxiety, and adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 14*, 301-317.

- Garza-Guerrero, A. C. (1974). Culture shock: Its mourning and the vicissitudes of identity. *Journal of American Psychoanalytic Association*, 22, 408-429.
- Gilly, M. C. (1995). The consumer acculturation of expatriate Americans. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 22(1), 506-510.
- Glesne, C. & Peshkin A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. White Plains, New York: Longman.
- GMAC (2008). Global Relocation Trends 2008 Survey Report. Woodridge, IL, GMAC Global Relocation Services, LLC. 2007. Retrieved February 14, 2009 from <http://espritgloballearning.com/includes/2008GMACSURVEY.pdf>
- GMAC Global Relocation Services, N. F. T. C. S. G. F. (2004). Global Relocation Trends 2003/2004 Survey Report. Retrieved April 23, 2007, from <http://www.gmacglobalrelocation.com/WhitePapers/GTS%202002%20ONLINE.pdf>.
- Goodall, K., Li, N. & Warner, M. (2006/2007). Expatriate managers in China: the influence of Chinese culture on cross-cultural management. *Journal of General Management*, 32(2), 57-76.
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 8, 597-607.
- Graves, T. D. (1967). Acculturation, access, alcohol in a tri-ethnic country. *American Anthropologist*, 59, 306-321.
- Greenland, K., & Brown, R. (2005). Acculturation and contact in Japanese students studying in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 145, 373-389.

- Gregersen, H. B., & Black, J. S. (1990). A multifaceted approach to expatriate retention in overseas assignments. *Group and Organization Studies*, 15, 461-485.
- Grove, C., & Torbiörn, I. (1985). A new conceptualization of intercultural adjustment and the goals of training. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 9, 205-233.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). *Effective evaluation: Improving the usefulness of evaluation results through responsive and naturalistic approaches*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Competing paradigms in qualitative research*. In Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (2005). *An anxiety/uncertainty management theory of effective communication: Making the mesh of the net finer. Theorizing about intercultural communication* (Paperback). W. B. Gudykunst. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gullahorn, J. T., & Gullahorn, J. E. (1963a). An extension of the U-curve hypothesis. *Journal of Social Issues*, 19, 33-47.
- Gullahorn, J. T., & Gullahorn, J. E. (1963b). Visiting Fulbright professors as agents of cross-cultural communication. *Sociology and Social Research*, 46, (282-293).
- Gupta, A. K., & Govindarajan, V. (2002). Cultivating a global mindset. *Academy of Management Executive*, 16(1), 116-126.
- Haigh, J., & Crowther, G. (2005). Interpreting Motorcycling Through its Embodiment in Life Story Narratives, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 21, 555-572.
- Hall, E. T. (1959). *The silent language*. New York: Anchor Press Doubleday.

- Hall, E. T. (1966). *The hidden dimension*. New York: Anchor Press Doubleday.
- Hammer, M. R. (1986). Behavioral dimensions of intercultural effectiveness. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10, 65-87.
- Hammer, M. R., Bennett. M. J., & Wiseman, R. (2003). Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The intercultural development inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27(4), 421-443.
- Hammond, S. C., & Glenn, L. M. (2004). The ancient practice of Chinese social networking: Guanxi and social network theory. *Emergence: Complexity & Organization*, 6(1/2), 24-31.
- Hannigan, T. P. (1990). Traits, attitudes and skills that are related to intercultural effectiveness and their implications for cross-cultural training: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14(2), 89-111.
- Harris, H., & Kumra, S. (2000). International manager development: Cross-cultural training in highly diverse environments. *Journal of Management Development*, 19(7), 602-614.
- Harris, P., & Moran, R. (1991). *Managing cultural differences*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Harvey, M. G. (1985). The executive family: An overlooked variable in international assignments. *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 84-92.
- Harzing, A. W. K. (1995). The persistent myth of high expatriate failure rates. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 6(2), 457-474.

- Harzing, A. W. K. (2001a). Who is in charge: An empirical study of executive staffing practices in foreign subsidiaries. *Human Resource Management*, Summer, 139-158.
- Harzing, A. W. K. (2001b). An analysis of the functions of international transfer of managers in MNCs. *Employee Relations*, 23(6), 581.
- Harzing, A. W. K. (2001c). Of bears, bumble-bees and spiders: The role of expatriates in controlling foreign subsidiaries. *Journal of World Business*, 36(4), 366-379.
- Harzing, A. W. K., & Van Ruysseveldt, J. (2004). *International human resource management*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hawes, F., & D. J. Kealey (1981). An empirical study of Canadian technical assistance. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 5, 239-258.
- Hechanova, R., Beehr, T. A. & Christiansen, N. D. (2003). Antecedents and consequences of employees' adjustment to overseas assignment: A meta-analytic review. *Applied Psychology*, 52(2), 213-236.
- Hetrick, S. (2002). Transferring HR ideas and practices: Globalization and convergence in Poland. *Human Resource Development International*, 5(3), 333-351.
- Hocking, J., Brown, M. & Harzing, A-W. (2004). A knowledge transfer perspective of strategic assignment purposes and their path-dependent outcomes. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 15(3), 565-586.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. London: McGraw-Hill.

- Hofstede, G. (1999). Problems remain, but theories will change: The universal and the specific in 21st-century global management. *Organizational Dynamics*, 28(1), 34-44.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Hofstede, G., & Bond, M. H. (1988). The Confucius connection: From cultural roots to economic growth. *Organizational Dynamics*, 16(4), 5-21.
- Hofstede, G., & Hofstede, G. J. (2005). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. (2nd Ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Holopainen, J., & Björkman, I. (2005). The personal characteristics of the successful expatriate: A critical review of the literature and an empirical investigation. *Personnel Review*, 34(1), 37-50.
- Horsburgh, D. (2003). Evaluation of qualitative research. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 12, 307-312.
- Hullinger, H. (1995). Antecedents of intercultural adjustment of American expatriates in the People's Republic of China. Graduate College of Education, Oklahoma State University.
- Jacques, M. (2009). *When China rules the world: The end of the Western world and the birth of a new global order*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- Janesick, V. J. (2003). *The choreography of qualitative research design: Minuets, improvisations, and crystallization. Strategies of qualitative inquiry*. N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Joo-seng, T. (2004). Cultural Intelligence and the global economy. *Leadership in Action*, 24(5), 19-21.
- Jung, C. G., K. H. Lee & K. D. Hwang (2007). A study on the sociocultural factors of the adjustment of foreign workers. *The Korean Association of Personnel Administration* 31(2): 1–28.
- Kaye, M., & Taylor, W. G. K. (1997). Expatriate culture shock in China: A study in the Beijing hotel industry. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 12(7/8), 496.
- Kealey, D. J. (1989). A study of cross-cultural effectiveness: Theoretical issues and practical applications. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 13, 387-428.
- Kealey, D. J., Protheroe, D. R. , MacDonald, D. & Vulpe, T. (2005). Re-examining the role of training in contributing to international project success: A literature review and an outline of a new model training program. *Intercultural Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29, 289-316.
- Kelley, C., & Meyers, J. (1999). The Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory. *Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross-Cultural Training Methods*. S. Fowler, & M. Mumford. Yarmouth, *Intercultural Press*, 2, 53-70.
- Kim, Y. Y. (1988). *Communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Kim, Y. Y. (2001). *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Kim, Y. Y. (2005). *Adapting to a new culture: An integrative communication theory. Theorizing about intercultural communication*. W. B. Gudykunst. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kim, Y. Y., & Gudykunst, W. B. (1988). *Theories in intercultural adaptation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kleinberg, O., & Hull, W. (1979). *At a foreign university*. New York: Praeger.
- Kluge, A. (2006). *Syllabus for BUSG 704 – Doctoral Research Seminar*. Ethical responsibilities of a Christian researcher. (Available from George Fox University, 414 N. Meridian Street, Newberg, OR 97132).
- Kohls, R. L. (1979). *Survival kit for overseas living: For Americans planning to live and work abroad*. Chicago, IL: Intercultural Press.
- Kohls, R. L. (1984a). *Intercultural training: Don't leave home without it*. Washington, DC: Sietar.
- Kohls, R. L. (1984b). *Survival kit for overseas living*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Kraimer, M. L., Wayne, S. J., & Jaworski, R. A. (2001). Sources of support and expatriate performance: the mediating role of expatriate adjustment. *Personnel Psychology, 54*, 71-101.
- Krishnan, A., & Berry, J. W. (1992). Acculturative stress and acculturation attitudes among Indian immigrants to the United States. *Psychology and Developing Societies, 4*, 187-212.
- Kroeber, A. L., & Kluckhohn, C. (1952). *Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions*. Harvard University Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology.

- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing* (Paperback). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Kynge, J. (2006). *China shakes the world: A titan's rise and troubled future - and the challenge for America*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company
- La Brack, B., & Bernardo, K. (2007). *Is it time to retire the U and W-curves of adjustment?* Forum on Education Abroad, Austin, TX.
- Lancy, D. F. (1993). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to the major traditions*. New York: Longman.
- Lauer, J. M., & Asher, J. (1988). *Composition research: Empirical designs*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, coping and appraisal*. New York: Springer.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Launier, R. (1978). *Stress-related transactions between person and environment. Perspectives in Interactional Psychology*. L. A. Pervin, & M. Lewis. New York: Plenum.
- Lee, C. (2003). *Cowboys and Dragons: Shattering cultural myths to advance Chinese/American Business*. Kaplan Business.
- Lee, H. W. (2005). The factors influencing expatriates. *Journal of American Academy of Business, Cambridge*, 6(2), 273-278.
- Lee, H. W. (2007). Factors that influence expatriate failure: An interview study. *International Journal of Management*, 24(3), 403-413.
- Leung, E. P. (2006). *Essentials of modern Chinese history*. (Paperback). Piscataway, NJ: Research and Education Association.

- Leung, T. K. P., Lai, K. H, Chan, R. Y. K., Wong, Y. H., (2005). The roles of xinyong and guanxi in Chinese relationship marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39(5/6), 528-559.
- Li, L. (1996). Antecedents and consequences of expatriate satisfaction: An empirical investigation of hotel managers in Pacific Asian countries. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 27(2), 438-439.
- Lin, J. Y., Cai, F., & Li, Z. (2009). *The lessons of China's transition to a market economy. Governing rapid growth in China: Equity and institutions*. R. Kanbur, & X. Zhang. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Liu, X., & Shaffer, M. (2005). An investigation of expatriate adjustment and performance: A social capital perspective. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, CCM*, 5(3), 235.
- Lobel, S. A. (1990). Global leadership competences: Managing to a different drumbeat. *Human Resource Management*, 29(1), 39-47.
- Lu, C.-J., & Shulman, S. W. (2008). Rigor and flexibility in computer-based qualitative research: Introducing the coding analysis toolkit. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, 2(1), 105–117.
- Lublin, J. S. & Smith, C. S. (1994). Management: US companies struggle with scarcity of executives to run outpost in China. *Wall Street Journal*. August 23: B1.
- Luo, Y. (1997). Guanxi: Principles, philosophies, and implications. *Human Systems Management*, 16(1), 43.

- Lysgaard, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fulbright grantees visiting the United States. *International Social Science Bulletin*, 7, 45-51.
- Ma, J. (1999). Cross-cultural training for expatriates in U.S. global corporations: A comparative study. School of Policy Studies, Department of Public Administration and Urban Studies. Atlanta, GA, Georgia State University. Doctor of Philosophy in Human Resource Development.
- Mamman, A. (1995). *Expatriates' intercultural effectiveness by chance of birth. Expatriate management: New ideas for international business*. J. Selmer. Westport: Quorum Books. 137-55.
- Mann, C. & Stewart, F. (2000). *Internet communication and qualitative research: A handbook for researching online*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Marquardt, M., & Berger, N. (2003). The future: Globalization and new roles for HRD. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 5(3), 283.
- Marquardt, M. J., & Engel, D. W. (1993). *Global human resource development*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research*. (Paperback – 3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Marti, M. E. (2002). *China and the legacy of Deng Xiaoping*. Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, Inc.
- McEnery, J., & DesHarnais, G. (1990). Culture shock. *Training and Development Journal*, 45–47

- McEvoy, G. M., & Parker, B. (1995). *Expatriate adjustment: Causes and consequences. Expatriate management: New ideas for international business*. J. Selmer. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.
- Mehra, B. (2002, March). Bias in qualitative research: Voices from an online classroom. *The Qualitative Report*, 7(1). Retrieved October 7, 2011, from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR7-1/mehra.html>
- Mendenhall, M., E. Dunbar, & Oddou, G. R. (1987). Expatriate selection, training and career pathing: A review and critique. *Human Resource Management*, 26(3), 331-345.
- Mendenhall, M., & Oddou, G. (1985). The dimensions of expatriate acculturation: A review. *Academy of Management Review*, 10(1), 39.
- Mendenhall, M., & Oddou, G. (1986). Acculturation profiles of expatriate managers: Implications for cross-cultural training programs. *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 21(4), 73-79.
- Mendenhall, M., & Oddou, G. (1991). *Readings and cases in international human resource management*. Boston, MA: PWS-Kent Publishing Company.
- Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Merriam, S. B. (1992). *Qualitative research in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mervosh, E. M., & McClenahan, J. S. (1997). The care and feeding of expats. *Industry Week*.

- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mohamed, O. (1997). *Counselling for excellence. Overseas students in higher education*. D. McNamara, & R. Harris. London: Routledge.
- Mohr, A., & Klein, S. (2004). Exploring the adjustment of American expatriate spouses in Germany. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 15(7), 1189-1206.
- Mumford, D. (1998). The measurement of culture shock. *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 33(4), 149.
- Murphy, H. B. M. (1965). *Migration and the major mental disorders. Mobility and mental health*. M. Kantor. Springfield, IL: Thomas.
- Nash, D. (1991). The course of sojourner adaptation: A new test of the U-curve hypothesis. *Human Organization*, 50, 283-286.
- Naumann, E. (1992). A Conceptual Model of Expatriate Turnover. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 23(3): 499–531.
- Netralia (2010). CallBurner. [computer software]. Melbourne, Australia: Netralia Pty Ltd.
Available from: <http://www.callburner.com/download>
- Noorderhaven, N. G., & Harzing, A. W. K. (2009). Knowledge-sharing and social interaction within MNEs. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 40(5), 719-741.

- Oberg, K. (1954). *Culture shock*, Report A-329. Bobbs-Merrill Series. S. Sciences. Indianapolis.
- Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural shock: Adjustment to new environments. *Practical Anthropology*, 7, 177-182.
- Olebe, M., & Koester, J. (1989). Exploring cross-cultural equivalence of the behavior assessment scale for intercultural communication. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 13, 333-347.
- Ones, D. S., & Viswesvaran, C. (1999). Relative importance for expatriate selection: A policy capturing study. *Human Performance*, 12, 275–294.
- Osgathorp Smith, M. K. (1993). Expatriate assignments in Taiwan: A perceptive study of cross-cultural experiences of U.S. executives and implications for training. Peabody College for Teachers, Vanderbilt University. Ed.D.
- Pantelidou, S., & T. K. Craig (2006). Culture shock and social support: A survey of Greek migrant students. *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 41, 777-781.
- Parker, B. & G. M. McEvoy (1993) Initial examination of a model of intercultural adjustment. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 17(3), 355–379.
- Patton, M. Q. (1985). *Quality in qualitative research: Methodological principles and recent developments*. Invited address to Division J of the American Educational Research Association. Chicago, IL.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

- Pedersen, P. (1995). *The five stages of culture shock: Critical incidents around the world*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Pedersen, P. B. (1999). *Multiculturalism as a fourth force*. Philadelphia: Brunner/Maze.
- Peppas, S. C. (2004). Making the most of international assignments: A training model for non-resident expatriates. *Journal of American Academy of Business, Cambridge*, 5(1/2), 41-45.
- Plafker, T. (2007). *Doing business in China: How to profit in the world's fastest growing market*. New York: Hachette Book Group.
- Portela-Myers, H. H. (2006). The relationship between culture shock and social support of international students. Graduate Faculty of Education, North Carolina State University. Doctor of Philosophy.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (1999/2000). *International Assignments: European Policy and Practices Key Trends 1999/2000*.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (2002). *International assignment European Policy and Practice: key trends 2002*.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (2005). *International assignment European Policy and Practice: key trends 2005*.
- Punnett, B. J. (1997). Towards an effective management of expatriate spouses. *Journal of World Business*, 3, 243-258.
- Qui, X. (1995). China witnesses steadily progressing economy. *Beijing Review*, 38(33), 7-10.
- Quinlan, J. (2007). The Top 10 things every investor should know about U.S.-China relations. Kiplinger Business Resource Center December. Retrieved 10/09/09,

from

http://www.kiplinger.com/businessresource/summary/archive/2007/china_checklist_quinlan.html.

QSR International (2011). NVivo 9.0. [computer software]. Cambridge, MA: QSR

International. Available from:

http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo_free-trial-software.aspx

Ravallion, M., & Chen, S. (2007). China's (uneven) progress against poverty. *Journal of Development Economics*, 82, 1-42.

Redfield, R., R. Linton, & Herskovits, M. J. (1936). Memorandum for the study of acculturation. *American Anthropologist* 38, 149-152.

Rhinesmith, S. (1985). *Bringing home the world*. New York: Walsh & Co.

Richardson, A. (1974). *British immigrants and Australia: A psycho-social inquiry*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.

Riege, A. M. (2003). Validity and reliability tests in case study research: a literature review with hands-on applications for each research phase. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 6(2), 75-86.

Root, F. R. (1976). U.S.-based multinationals and the industrial world: Two alternative futures. *Peace & Change*, 4(1), 34.

Ruben, B. D. (1983). *A system-theoretic view*. *International and intercultural communication annual*. W. B. Gudykunst. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage. 12, Intercultural communication theory, 131-145.

- Ruben, B. D., & Kealey, D. J. (1979). Behavioral assessment of communication competency and the prediction of cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 3, 15-47.
- Saillar, E. K. (2011). Systematic versus interpretive analysis with Two CAQDAS Packages: NVivo and MAXQDA. *Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. 12(1), 34. Retrieved April 02, 2011, from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/viewArticle/1518/3133>
- Salant, T., & Lauderdale, D. (2003). Measuring culture: A critical review of acculturation and health in Asian immigrant populations. *Social Science and Medicine*, 57(1), 71-90.
- Sappinen, J. (1993). Expatriate adjustment on foreign assignment. *European Business Review*, 93(5), 3-12.
- Schaap, A. (1992). *Some major aspects of corporate culture of four equity joint ventures in China: An exploratory research*. Eindhoven University of Technology.
- Schein, E. S. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schell, M. S., & Solomon, C. M. (1997). *Capitalizing on the global workforce: A strategic guide to expatriate management*. London: Irwin.
- Searle, W., & C. Ward. (1990). The prediction of psychological and sociological adjustment during cross-cultural transitions. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14, 449-464.
- Segall, M. H., W. J. Lonner, & Berry, J. W. (1998). Cross-cultural psychology as a scholarly discipline: On the flowering of culture in behavioral research. *American Psychologist*: 1101-1110.

- Seidman, I. (2006). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences.
- Selmer, J. (1999a). Career issues and international adjustment of business expatriates. *Career Development International*, 4(2), 77-87.
- Selmer, J. (1999b). Culture shock in China? Adjustment pattern of Western expatriate business managers. *International Business Review*, 8(5-6), 515-534.
- Selmer, J. (1999c). Effects of coping strategies on socio-cultural and psychological adjustment of Western expatriate managers in the PRC. *Journal of World Business*, 34(1), 41-51.
- Selmer, J. (2000a). Adjustment of Western business expatriate in Hong Kong versus the Chinese mainland. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 17, 519-538.
- Selmer, J. (2000b). Adjustment of Western business expatriates assigned to China: The relationship between sociocultural and psychological adjustment. *Journal of Global Business*, 11(20), 29-37.
- Selmer, J. (2000c). Psychological barriers to international adjustment: North American vs. Western European business expatriates in China. *Cross-Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 7(3), 13-18.
- Selmer, J. (2001a). Adjustment of Western European vs. North American expatriate managers in China. *Personnel Review*, 30(1), 6-21.
- Selmer, J. (2001b). Psychological barriers to adjustment and how they affect coping strategies: Western business expatriates in China. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 12(2), 151-165.

- Selmer, J. (2001c). Who wants an expatriate business career? - In search of the cosmopolitan manager. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 1(2), 173-185.
- Selmer, J. (2002a). Coping strategies applied by Western vs. overseas Chinese business expatriates in China. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 13(1), 19-34.
- Selmer, J. (2002b). To train or not to train? European expatriate managers in China. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 2(1), 37-51.
- Selmer, J. (2002c). The Chinese connection? Adjustment of Western vs. overseas Chinese expatriate managers in China. *Journal of Business Research*, 55(1), 41-50
- Selmer, J. (2003). Staff localization and organizational characteristics: Western business operations in China. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 10(1), 43-57.
- Selmer, J. (2004). Psychological barriers to adjustment of Western business expatriates in China: newcomers vs. long stayers. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 15(4/5), 794-813.
- Selmer, J. (2005a). Cross-cultural training and expatriate adjustment in China: Western joint venture managers. *Personnel Review*, 34(1), 68-84.
- Selmer, J. (2005b). Is bigger better? Size of the location and expatriate adjustment in China. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16(7), 1228-1242.
- Selmer, J. (2006a). Adjustment of business expatriates in Greater China: A strategic perspective. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 17(12), 1994-2008.

- Selmer, J. (2006b). Cultural novelty and adjustment: Western business expatriates in China. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 17(7), 1209-1222.
- Selmer, J. (2006c). Language ability and adjustment: Western expatriates in China. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 48(3), 347-368.
- Selmer, J. (2006d). Munificence of parent corporate contexts and expatriate cross-cultural training in China. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 12(1), 39-51.
- Selmer, J., & Lee, S. (1994). International Transfer and Assignment of Australian and European Business Executives. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 32(3), 1-12.
- Selmer, J., & Shiu, L. S.-C. (1999). Coming home? Adjustment of Hong Kong Chinese expatriate business managers assigned to the People's Republic of China. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 23, 447-465.
- Sergeant, A., & Frenkel, S. (1988). Managing people in China: perceptions of expatriate managers. *Journal of World Business*, 33(1), 17-34.
- Shaffer, M. A., & Harrison, D. A. (1998). Expatriates' psychological withdrawal from international assignments: Work, non-work, and family influences. *Personnel Psychology*, 51(1) 87-118.
- Shaffer, M. A., Harrison, D. A., & Gilley, M. K. (1999). Dimensions, determinants, and differences in expatriate adjustment. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 30, 557-581.
- Shih, H.-A., Chiang, Y.-H., & Kim, I.-S. (2005). Expatriate performance management from MNEs of different national origins. *International Journal of Manpower*, 26(2), 157-176.

- Shuttleworth, M. (2009). Research Bias. Retrieved October 6, 2011 from Experiment Resources: <http://www.experiment-resources.com/research-bias.html>.
- Simeon, R., & Fujiu, K. (2000). Cross cultural adjustment strategies of Japanese spouses in Silicon Valley. *Employee Relations*, 22(6), 594-611.
- Simon, H. (1991). Organisations and markets. *Journal of Econ Perspectives*, 5, 25-44.
- Simons, G., Vazquez, C. & Harris, P. (1993). *Transcultural leadership: Empowering the diverse workforce*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Skype (2010). Skype for Windows version 5.3 [computer software]. Luxembourg: Skype Technologies S.A. Available from: <http://www.skype.com/intl/en-us/get-skype/on-your-computer/windows/>
- Smalley, W. (1963). Culture shock, language shock and the shock of self-discovery. *Practical Anthropology*, 10, 63-76.
- Solomon, C. (1995). Learning to manage host-country nationals. *Personnel Journal*, 73(3), 60-66.
- Solomon, C. (1996). Danger below! Spot failing global assignments. *Personnel Journal*, 75(11), 78-85.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2000). (Im)politeness, face and perceptions of rapport: Unpackaging their bases and interrelationships. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 1, 95-119.
- Stahl, G. K., & Caligiuri, P. (2005). The effectiveness of expatriate coping strategies: The moderating role of cultural distance, position level, and time on the international assignment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(4), 603-615.
- Stainback, S., & Stainback, W. (1988). Educating students with severe disabilities in regular classes. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 21, 16-19.

- Stenbacka, C. (2001). Qualitative research requires quality concepts of its own. *Management Decision*, 39(7), 531-555.
- Stephens, G. K., & Black, J. S. (1991). The Impact of Spouse's Career-Oriented Doting *International Transfers. Management Studies*, 28(4), 417-428.
- Stone, R. J. (1991). Expatriate selection and failure. *Human Resource Planning*, 14(1), 9-18.
- Stonequist, E. V. (1935). The problem of the marginal man. *American Journal of Sociology*, (41), 1-12.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Stroh, L. K. (1995). Predicting turnover among repatriates: Can organizations affect retention rates? *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 6(2), 443-457.
- Stuttard, J. B. (2000). *The new silk road: Secrets of business success in China today*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Su, C., R. K. Mitchell, & Sirghy, M. J. (2007). Enabling guanxi management in China: A hierarchical stakeholder model of effective guanxi. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 71(3), 301-319.
- Suutari, V., & Busch, D. (2001). The role of on-site training and support in expatriation: Existing and necessary host-company practices. *Career Development International*, 6, 289-311.

- Swaak, R. (1995). Expatriate failures: Too many, too much cost, too little planning. *Compensation and Benefits Review*, 27(6), 47-55
- Swanson, R. A., & Holton III, E. F. (2005). *Research in organizations: Foundations and methods of inquiry*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Tadla, E. (2007). *How to live & do business in China: Eight lessons I learned from the Communists*. Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing.
- Taft, R. (1977). *Coping with unfamiliar cultures*. London, England: Academic Press.
- Tao, Z. (2008). *The first emperor of China and his entombed terra cotta army*. Shaanxi: Travel Tourism Press.
- Temple, R. (2007). *The genius of China: 3,000 years of science, discovery, and invention*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions.
- Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research: Analysis types and software tools*. New York: The Falmer Press.
- The US-China Business Council (USCBC) (2009). US-China trade statistics and China's world trade statistics. Retrieved 10/12/09, 2009, from <http://www.uschina.org/statistics/tradetable.html>
- Thomson, S. B. (2011). Sample size and grounded theory. *JOAAG*, 5(1).
- Tomlinson, J. (1999). *Globalization and culture*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Tong, C. K., & Yong, P. K. (1998). Guanxi bases, xinyong and Chinese business networks. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 49(1), 75-96.
- Torbion, I. (1982). *Living abroad: Personal adjustment and personnel policy in the overseas setting*. New York: Wiley.

- Torbion, I. (1994). *Dynamics of cross-cultural adaptation. Learning across cultures*. G. Athen. New York: NAFSA.
- Triandis, H. C. (1993). *The contingency model in cross-cultural perspective*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Triandis, H. C. (1994). *Culture and social behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (1997). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding cultural diversity in business*. London: Nicholas Brearley.
- Tsang, E. (1998). Can guanxi be a source of sustained competitive advantage for doing business in China? *Academy of Management Executive*, 12(2), 64-73.
- Tung, R. L. (1981). Selection and training of personnel for overseas assignments. *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 16(1), 68.
- Tung, R. L. (1982). Selection and training procedures of U.S., European, and Japanese multinationals. *California Management Review*, 25(1), 57.
- Tung, R. L. (1984). Strategic Management of Human Resources in the Multinational Enterprise. *Human Resource Management*, 23(2), 129-143.
- Tung, R. L. (1986). Corporate executives and their families in China: The need for cross-cultural understanding in business. *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 21(1), 21-25.
- Tung, R. L. (1987). Expatriate assignments: Enhancing success and minimizing failure. *Academy of Management Executive*, 1(2), 117-125.
- Tung, R. L. (1988). Career issues in international assignments. *Academy of Management Executive* 2(3), 241-244.

- Tung, R. L. (1998a). A contingency framework of selection and training of expatriates revisited. *Human Resource Management Review*, 8(1), 23.
- Tung, R.L. (1998b). American expatriates abroad: From neophytes to cosmopolitans. *Journal of World Business*, 33(2), 125-144.
- Turner, G. H. (1988). *A theory of social interaction*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Twaronite, L. (2009). China still buying U.S. assets despite rhetoric. Asia Markets. July. Retrieved 10/09/09, 2009, from <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/china-still-buying-us-assets-despite-rhetoric>.
- Ulrich, D., Von Glinow, M., & T. Jick. (1993). High-impact learning: Building and diffusing learning capability. *Organizational Dynamics*, 22(2), 52-66.
- U.S. Commercial Service, US Embassy Beijing (2011). American expatriates in China. Non-official numbers estimated by the US Commercial Service, U.S. Embassy Beijing. Secured through personal communication with Oregon Business Development Department, on June 23, 2011.
- U.S. Department Of State. (2011). Background Note: China. Retrieved 06/26/2011 from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/18902.htm>
- VERBI (2011). MAXQDA 10 [computer software]. Marburg, Germany: VERBI GmbH. Available from: <http://www.maxqda.com/downloads/demo>
- Walton, S. (1990). Stress management training for overseas effectiveness. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14, 507-527.

- Wang, X. & P. J. Sangalang (2005). Work adjustment and job satisfaction of Filipino immigrant employees in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences* 22(3): 243–254.
- Ward, C. (1996). *Acculturation. Handbook of intercultural training*. D. Landis, & R. Bhagat. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2001). *The psychology of culture shock*. London: Routledge.
- Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1992). Locus of control, mood disturbance, and social difficulty during cross-cultural transitions. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 16(2), 175-194.
- Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1993). Where's the culture in cross-cultural transition? Comparative studies of sojourner adjustment. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 24, 221-249.
- Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1996). Crossing cultures: The relationship between psychological and sociocultural dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment. In J. Pandey, D. Sinha, & D. P. S. Bhawuk (Eds.), *Asian contributions to cross-cultural psychology* (pp. 289-306). New Delhi: Sage
- Ward, C., & Searle, W. (1991). The impact of value discrepancies and cultural identity on psychological and sociocultural adjustment of sojourners. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 15(2), 209-225
- Ward, C., Y. Okura, Kennedy, A., & Kojima, T. (1998). The U-curve on trial: A longitudinal study of psychological and sociological adjustment during cross-cultural transition. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 22, 277-291.

- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Welch, D. (2003). Globalization of staff movements: Beyond cultural adjustment. *Management International Review*, 43, 149-162.
- Weldon, E., & Jehn, K. A. (1996). Conflict management in U.S.-Chinese joint ventures. In Child, J. and Lu, Y. (Eds) *Management Issues in China, 2, International Enterprises*. London: Routledge.
- Wheatley, M. J. (1999). *Leadership and the new science: Discovering order in a chaotic world*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Wills, S., & Barham, K. (1994). Being an international manager. *European Management Journal* 12, 49 - 58.
- Winkelman, M. (1994). Cultural shock and adaptation. *Journal of Counseling & Development* 73, 121-126.
- Wong, P. T. P., Wong, L. C. J. & Scott, C. (2006). *Beyond stress and coping: The positive psychology of transformation Handbook of multicultural perspectives on stress and coping*. P. T. P. Wong & L. C. J. Wong. New York, Springer: 1-28.
- Worm, V. (1997). *Vikings and Mandarins: Sino-Scandinavian business cooperation in cross-cultural settings*. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Worthen, B. R., J. R. Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, J. L. (1997). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. New York: Longman.
- Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research: Design and method*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Zahama, R. S. (1989). Self-shock: The double-binding challenge of identity. *Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 13, 501-525.

Zeira, Y., & Banai, M. (1985). Selection of expatriate managers in MNCs: The host environment point of view. *International Studies of Management and Organisation*, 15(1), 31-51.

Zimmermann, A., Holman, D., & Sparrow, P. (2003). Unraveling adjustment mechanisms: Adjustment of German expatriates to intercultural interactions, work and living conditions in the People's Republic of China. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 3(1), 45–66.